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ITALY:

GENERAL VIEWS

OF

ITS HISTORY AND LITERATURE

IN REFERENCE TO

ITS PRESENT STATE.

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BY L. MARIOTTI.

"POST FATA RESURGENS."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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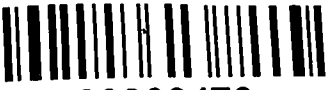
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ITALY.

THIRD PERIOD.—ITALIAN PRINCIPALITIES.

CHAPTER I.

RESTORATION OF CLASSICAL LITERATURE.

Age of Cosmo de Medici, Poggio, Filelfo, &c.—Princely patronage—Public libraries—Printing—Academies—Literary quarrels—Persecution of Learning—Immoral and irreligious tendency of the age—Age of Lorenzo de Medici—Politiano—Pico della Mirandola—Learned ladies—Influence of Italy on learning abroad—Consequences of foreign invasions on literature—Age of Leo X.—The Reformation—The fine arts—Michael Angelo.

A LAPSE of nearly one hundred years must be considered as entirely lost in the progress of original Italian literature. Nature had, by a rare phenomenon, given birth to three sovereign minds in the same country, in the same city, and very nearly in the same age, and, by the wisest disposition, so tempered each of them as to suit them to widely different and yet equally important purposes.

But Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio did not

flourish alone. Each of them found himself surrounded by a certain number of planets and satellites, which, as they received their light from the supreme luminary, so they were gradually outshone and eclipsed, until they sunk and disappeared in the distance of age.

Thus, in imitation of that Gothic fabric of the Divine Comedy, for which the model could perhaps already be found in the works of Brunetto Latini, Dante's master,—other allegorical, metaphysical, encyclopedical poems were produced, some of which have been preserved rather for the curiosity, than either for the edification or the delight of posterity.

In like manner Petrarch was neither the first nor the last bard of Platonic love, though his school can only be said to have been established two centuries later; and Boccaccio had likewise his precursors and followers, if, at least, we are to believe the assertion, that many if not all the "Cento Novelle Antiche" were written before the "Decameron," as the "Pecorone" of Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, and the "Novelle" di Franco Sacchetti were written in imitation of it.

Of all these works, however, and of the various and not unfrequently entertaining vicissitudes of the life of their authors, it en-

ters not into the plan of this work to give an account. Their existence has only been mentioned, lest that great triumvirate might appear rather as an anomaly than a natural consequence of the state of the human mind in Italy during the fourteenth century.

It is not consistent with the laws of nature, that one or a few individuals should reach any considerable eminence without a large retinue of inferior talents, destined to enhance their greatness by a comparative insignificance.

"The loftiest crests of the Alps," as Sismondi observes, "do not rise alone in their middle way to the sky. Chains and ridges branch out in every direction, as if meant for a counterpoise and support to the main Cordillera, but the farther we recede from them, the inferior eminences are lost in the vastness of the landscape, while those proudest summits, rise higher and higher on their gigantic thrones."

But, after the death of the three great Florentines, the land seemed exhausted and weary. There followed an epoch of superstitious wonderment, of contemplative hesitation. The impulse given by Petrarch and Boccaccio towards the revival of classical literature laid open before the scholars of the fifteenth century, unexplored treasures, which dazzled

more than enlightened their still imbecile understanding. They began to apprehend that those generous founders of the national literature had ventured too far without the escort, sometimes even in open violation of the laws, visibly resulting from the models of antiquity.

Petrarch and Boccaccio themselves seemed to have encouraged that illiberal notion,—they displayed or affected an unqualified contempt for their Italian juvenile productions, and regretted the time which they had spent otherwise than in the study and imitation of the ancients. These classical researches, which at first were meant only as a secondary object of scholastic pursuit, soon engrossed all their successors' attention and care. To collect, decypher, compare, and transcribe Greek and Latin manuscripts, was the occupation in which men of eminent talent chiefly delighted. To be appointed as a teacher of languages and expounder of ancient texts at one of the new universities of Florence, Pavia, or Naples, became the object of the scholar's ambition. In their more than religious fondness for the writings of the dead, they lost sight of that new literature, fresh, fragrant and full of life, of which the preceding century had given such promising first-fruits.

They were not unlike the navigators of the

same age, who suffered the vastness and importance of the American continent, to which a fortuitous discovery had led them, to withdraw for a time their attention from the primitive object of their nautical enterprises—the road to the East Indies.

Yet even that ardour for classical pursuits—owing, perhaps, to the wars of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, of Ladislaus of Naples, and of the great western schism,—seemed to undergo a temporary intermission.

From the death of Petrarch to the age of Poggio Bracciolini, there runs a considerable interval, which is hardly filled up by any name of note. Coluccio Salutato, an accomplished poet and scholar, a friend of Petrarch, who shared with him the honour of the laurel, survived him several years, and was still living after the close of the fourteenth century. John of Ravenna, the pupil of Petrarch, cherished by him with paternal fondness, and the source of frequent trouble and uneasiness to him, presided for many years over the schools of Padua and Florence, and numbered among his disciples the most conspicuous men of the following age.*

* Coluccio Salutato, born near Pescia, 1330; apostolical secretary under Urban V., 1368; Florentine secretary, 1375; died 1406; the laurel was solemnly laid on his bier. Prin-

The Greek school which Boccaccio and his master Leontius Pilatus had opened in Florence was soon neglected and deserted. It was only towards the year 1395 that Greek literature was definitely imported into Italy. Emmanuel Chrysoloras, a learned Greek of noble birth, who had been sent to the west to solicit Christian aid in favour of Constantinople, menaced by the Turks, was prevailed upon to remain as a teacher of his native language in Florence, whence he successively passed over to other universities, until, at his death, in 1415, no less than five Italian towns possessed the advantages of a Greek school.*

Meanwhile, the true age of erudition had finally dawned.

Leonardo Bruni of Arezzo, Guarino of Verona, and Aurispa from Sicily, Ambrogio Traversaro, Poggio Bracciolini, and Filelfo at Florence, and Antonio Beccatelli at Naples, vied with each other in their learned enterprises.†

cipal work, "De nobilitate legum et medicinæ." Venice, 1542.—John of Ravenna born 1350; died 1420.

* Emmanuel Chrysoloras, born at Constantinople, 1350; ambassador to Venice, 1393; invited to Florence, 1396; died at the Council of Constance, 1415.

† Leonardo Bruni Aretino, born 1369; apostolical secretary, under Innocent VII., 1405; Florentine secretary, 1417; died 1444. Latin works: History of Florence, &c. Venice, 1570;

This constitutes that great constellation of scholars which have reflected so great a lustre on the age of Cosmo de Medici, and which has caused the world to attribute to that wealthy citizen the honour of being the first patron and promoter of literature.

It was the fortune of Cosmo and his descendants, as it was with Augustus and Mecœnas in Rome, to attach their names to the proudest epochs in the progress of the human understanding, and by the praise lavished upon them by the gratitude of unscrupulous

Italian: Vite di Dante e Petrarca. Padua, 1650.—Guarino da Verona, born 1370; died 1460. Translations of Plutarch, Strabo, &c.—John Aurispa from Sicily, born 1369; died at Ferrara, 1460.—Ambrogio Traversaro, born 1386; a monk of Camalduli, 1400; a general of the order, 1431; died 1439. Principal work, "Hodœporicon;" translations from the Greek. —Poggio Bracciolini, born at Terra Nova, territory of Arezzo, 1380; apostolical secretary under Boniface IX., Innocent VII., John XXIII., Martin V., Eugene IV., Nicholas V.; papal legate at the Council of Constance, 1415; Florentine secretary, 1453; died October 30, 1459. Works: A history of Florence. "De varietate fortunæ," "De miseria humanæ conditionis," "An seni sit uxor ducenda," "Facetiarum liber;" &c. Complete edition of his works. Bale, 1538.— Francesco Filelfo, born at Tolentino, 1398; married at Constantinople, 1424; died at Florence, 1481. Translations of Aristotle, Plutarch, Hippocrates, &c. Original works: "Orationes," "Epistolæ," &c.—Antonio Beccatelli or Panormita, born 1394; died at Naples, 1471. Works: Histories, orations, letters. Venice, 1559. Hermaphroditus. Paris, 1791.

writers to counteract the deeds of usurpation —sometimes even the vices and crimes with which they stood charged in the records of history.

Certainly it would be a manifest injustice to deny Cosmo de Medici the merit of suing for the friendship of the learned, of freely bestowing his immense riches to forward their views, of liberally entertaining many of them at his hospitable villas, of making his palace the centre of literary intercourse. Only be it remembered, that the Florentine merchant by such largesses only acted in compliance with the universal spirit of his age, and that letters were among the most efficient instruments by which he raised himself to power and popularity.

Ever since the days of Petrarch, who might be justly called the patron of princes, it was evident that no guard could better shield the person of a prince, could better grace his retinue, than a crowd of poets and scholars exalting their patron's taste and munificence. Literature in Italy owed its rise neither to the generosity of individuals, nor to the splendour and luxury of a court. It was the want of an active and enterprising age, which, being provided with the first necessaries and commodities of life, was naturally led to the cultivation

of those arts that constitute its charm and ornament.

Let us rather say that literature patronised princes. It was the lustre that the friendship of Petrarch conferred on their reign that reconciled the republicans of Lombardy to the yoke of the Visconti, Carrara, and Correggio. There was scarcely an Italian prince that had not recourse to that never-failing instrument of usurpation, and Cosmo in this found rivals among the noblest monarchs, no less than the vilest tyrants of his age.

Poggio Bracciolini was apostolic secretary to eight successive popes; he was in his later years secretary and historiographer to the Florentine republic; he and his fourteen illegitimate children were by popular suffrage exempted from the payment of taxes. Filelfo was received in triumph at Florence at his return from Constantinople, whence he brought a large collection of Greek manuscripts; and such was the veneration with which he was looked on, that, as he himself informs us, the ladies he met in the street respectfully gave way for him as he passed. Leonardo Aretino was visited by foreigners of distinction, many of whom even undertook long journeys to see him. A Spanish grandee knelt down in his

presence, and was with the greatest difficulty persuaded to quit a posture rather obsequious than comfortable. Emmanuel Chrysoloras, Guarino da Verona, and Beccatelli were hardly allowed any rest, so frequent and so urgent were the solicitations they received from all quarters. Gio. Galeazzo Visconti had well nigh recourse to violence to induce Chrysoloras to teach at his new university of Pavia. Nicolas of Este intrusted Guarino with the education of his sons and successors Lionello and Borso, and the young princes lived with their master in terms of the most cordial intimacy. Filippo Maria Visconti, otherwise a mean and avaricious tyrant, was, however, liberal of the largest presents to secure the services of Beccatelli. The emperor Sigismund crowned this distinguished scholar with his own hands at Parma. Alphonso the Magnanimous bestowed upon him the titles of nobility, and raised him to the highest offices of the state.

Men of letters amply shared the enthusiasm that the results of their labours so universally excited. In all their journeys, in all their diplomatic missions they never lost sight of the interests of literature.

Filelfo married the daughter of his master, John, brother of Emmanuel Chrysoloras, and

received books for her dowry. Poggio Bracciolini absented himself from the Council of Constance to search the darkest cellars of the convent of St. Gall, where, half buried in the dust, he found treasures of Latin classicism. Aurispa wasted all his fortune, and ran himself into debt, to purchase manuscripts in Greece. Guarino, who laboured at it with equal fervour, was shipwrecked at his return from Constantinople, and so great was his mortification at his irreparable loss, that his hair turned white in one night. Filelfo incessantly complained of the dishonesty of his friends, who refused to return to him the manuscripts he had lent for their use :—"This system of stealing each other's books was," as Tiraboschi observed, "sanctioned, as it were, by a superstitious feeling, akin to that which induced the religious enthusiasts of dark ages to rob the sanctuary of its relics."

No less devotion, diligence, and perseverance were required to rescue the monuments of ancient genius from the ravages of time, and from the long oblivion of barbarous ages. It seemed as if nature had lengthened the natural period of human life in that southern climate to fit those scholars for their important mission. Nearly all of them reached a mature and vigo-

rous old age. By their combined efforts almost all that is known of the ancient classics was either found or restored to its present state.

The books being found it became an object of equal importance to preserve them.

Petrarch, Boccaccio, Coluccio Salutato, and an Augustine monk, by name Ludovico Marsilio had already made the first attempts to establish a library. But their collections were either dispersed by wars, or destroyed by fire, or sold by their heirs soon after their death.

The first public library in Italy was the result of a liberal bequest of Niccolò Niccoli, a wealthy and accomplished Florentine, whose life had been spent in purchasing and copying manuscripts, and who left at his death in 1436, more than eight hundred volumes, chiefly Greek and Latin classics—an unparalleled treasure in that age.

These were, by his direction, consecrated to public use, and were by his executors placed in the Dominican monastery of St. Mark.

Cosmo de Medici, one of the sixteen curators appointed by Niccoli to the accomplishment of his last dispositions, had, himself, during all his lifetime purchased manuscripts from every part of the world, and laid the fou[illegible]

of what was, under his successors, called, "Bibliotheca Mediceo—Laurentiana.

Among the friends and guests of this accomplished man there was a learned priest, by name Tommaso da Sarzana, whose co-operation had been of the greatest avail to him, whilst busy with the arrangement of his own libraries, and whose zeal for the cause of learning was hardly inferior to that of his patron.

This inclination had soon a favourable opportunity of displaying itself on a larger field, when he was unexpectedly raised to the papal chair, on which occasion he assumed the name of Nicholas V.*

It has already been said of him that he governed the state with an iron sceptre, and quelled popular insurrections and baronial feuds by the effusion of blood. But as a friend and patron of literary men, he eclipsed the glory to which some of his predecessors were justly entitled, and was second to none of the succeeding pontiffs.

It was during his reign, in 1453, that Europe was startled by the melancholy announcement of the fall of Constantinople. Nicholas has

* Tommaso da Sarzana, born 1398; Bishop of Bologna, 1445; a cardinal, 1446; raised to the papacy, 1447; died, Ne[illegible]slator of Xenophon, Thucydides, Herodotus, &c.

been, not without good reason, charged with lukewarmness and apathy in a cause so intimately connected with the interests of Christianity. "Perhaps," it has been wittily observed, "as he had foretold the forthcoming ruin of the Greek empire, he thought that his honour as a prophet was engaged in the fulfilment of his prediction."

He certainly did not fail to reap from that catastrophe the most signal advantages for Rome and Italy.

The Greeks had been, for a long period, accustomed to repair to the west for a refuge against the convulsions and dangers with which they were incessantly threatened at home. But after the storming of their capital by the Turks of Mahomet II., they flocked to Italy in still greater numbers. The illustrious exiles brought with them in their flight these monuments of their forefathers' genius, which they well knew would secure them the most hospitable reception abroad. Many of these were by Nicholas V., welcomed and entertained at his court, some were even raised to the highest dignities in the church.

From the remnants of the Byzantine libraries which he purchased from them, and from what was constantly transmitted to him by his active

agents abroad, the Pope gathered the elements of the Vatican library, which he left at his death enriched with more than five thousand volumes.

But an easier and more certain and durable means of preserving books by their rapid reproduction and diffusion was afforded by a new contrivance, providentially coinciding with the epoch in which the exertions of Italian scholarship had been crowned with the most splendid success, and when its agency was likely to prove most useful to secure its results against future dispersion.* Printing is one of the few inventions of that age to which the Italians have absolutely no claims. But while thus yielding to a foreign nation the glory of this important discovery, Italy, as might be expected, was the first to reap its most glorious results. During the whole of the fifteenth, and part of the following century, Italy, and not unfrequently only one of the Italian towns, especially Venice, printed a greater number of books than all the rest of Europe put together. The first Greek and Oriental characters issued from Italian foundries, and the beautiful Roman and Italic types soon superseded the rude Gothic specimens of the German inventors.

* Invention of printing, 1450—1455.

The art of printing reached its last stage of perfection under Aldus in Venice.*

That active and incessant intercourse and eager co-operation which necessarily brought together the scholars of the fifteenth century in their common pursuits, gave origin to those literary associations to which they gave the name of academies. The first of these learned institutions seems to have been established at Naples under the patronage of Alphonso, who appointed Beccatelli its first president. After the death of the Panormita, in 1471, the academy continued under the direction of Pontano, and flourished in the midst of the calamities of the invasions of Charles VIII. and his successors.

But the association to which, perhaps, the name of academy was first given, was founded by Cosmo de Medici, at Florence.

Already, since the beginning of the fifteenth century, a Greek philosopher, by name Gemistus Pletho,—who had been a teacher of Chrysoloras at Constantinople, but who survived

* Sweynheim and Pannartz, German printers, settled at Subiaco, 1465.—The first Italian press was opened by Cennini, a goldsmith at Florence, under Lorenzo de Medici, 1471.—The press of Aldus established at Venice, 1488—1506. Reopened after a long interruption, 1512.—Paulus Manutius, successor of Aldus, 1533.—Aldus the junior continued the Venetian press, 1563; placed at the direction of the Vatican press, 1588.

him many years, and died aged more than one hundred years—had by suggestion of his pupil established himself at Florence, where he lectured on the dogmas of the philosophy of Plato. He had the good fortune to win over to his cause the wealthy Florentine citizen, who was by him brought to the determination of opening a Platonic academy. This was first presided by Marsilio Ficino the son of Cosmo's physician, who was from his boyhood placed under the tuition of Greek instructors with a view to initiate him in the doctrines of Platonism.*

The philosophy of Aristotle, or rather that of his Arabian commentators, had hitherto reigned uncontrolled in the west of Europe; but the Greek philosophers had been divided into opposite factions of Aristotelians and Platonists. This division, and the interminable controversies to which it gave rise, were, by the establishment of the Platonic academy, equally brought among the Italians.

The venom and rage of those literary debates have obtained, perhaps, a greater celebrity than the real service that some of the belligerent

* Marsilio Ficino born at Florence, 1433. His translation of Plato, 1460—1465; died, 1499.

parties performed in the restoration of classicism. The petulance, obstinacy, and almost childish vanity by which the greatest scholars were actuated, offer a melancholy evidence of the little influence of learning in refining and ennobling man's nature. It forms a very painful contrast with the upright and lofty behaviour of Dante, and with the unshaken intimacy existing in the preceding century between Boccaccio and Petrarch;—though this last, a man of letters *par excellence*, was not always superior to mean jealousy and petty resentment.

This has been the bane of the whole genus from the earliest ages to our era. But in the fifteenth century that quarrelsome spirit was altogether a Greek importation.

The first of those controversies that may be said to have made great sensation was a scholastic dispute on the merits of their respective systems of philosophy between two learned Greeks, Cardinal Bessarion and George of Trebisond, in which nearly all their contemporaries took an active part. That same Trapezuntius had also serious quarrels with Guarino of Verona and Poggio Bracciolini; with the last of whom he came to blows in the heat of controversy in the presence of an assembly of pontifical secretaries.

But by far the most turbulent and irritable spirit of the age was Filelfo, who could boast of having warred against all the literati of his acquaintance. To a vanity and arrogance which no friendly demonstration could propitiate, he added an uncommon degree of jealousy and suspicion. He was a dangerous ally, no less than an implacable adversary. Cosmo de Medici, for some time his friend and benefactor, became by turns the object of his virulent animosity. Leonardo Aretino, Niccoli and others, successively gathered the gauntlet so rashly thrown by him to their patron. But the greatest as well as the bitterest of Filelfo's antagonists was Bracciolini; the contest carried on by these two worthies for several years, with equal zeal and unction, afforded an unparalleled spectacle to the wondering multitude.

The main object of contention was soon lost sight of, arguments gave place to a mutual outpouring of personal abuse. There is hardly a vice however base, or a crime however dark, that these two champions and their auxiliaries do not stand charged with by their competitors. In the inefficiency of their libels they resorted to more violent means of silencing each other. Filelfo's life was more than twice attempted by the agents of his adversaries, while he is himself

strongly suspected of having hired a Greek assassin to murder Cosmo in his own palace.

These quarrels did not always, however, assume such a tragical mood; the lives of some of those scholars are full of amusing anecdotes. This same Filelfo, while at Constantinople, laid a wager of a hundred crowns against the beard of a Greek grammarian, by name Timotheus, on some trifling subject of philosophical discussion. Having won, he could be prevailed upon by no offer, menace, or entreaty, but insisted on having the gratification of shaving his venerable antagonist, with a pertinacity worthy of Shylock himself.

These scandalous disputes were reproduced in the succeeding age, and perpetuated from generation to generation with rare intermission. Among the names of the most famous wranglers of the following centuries are those of Politiano and Merula, of Caro and Castelvetro, Marini and Murtola, &c.

It is, however, consoling to find among the number, no such men as Ariosto or Tasso, Machiavello or Galileo. True genius is far above the mean jealousy in which such disputes originate, nor can stoop to the vile language in which they are carried on. Like the eagle it soars in the highest regions of the air, where the

shafts of malignity can indeed occasionally reach it, but utterly exhausted and blunted by distance.

Contemporaneous with the Neapolitan and Florentine academy was another classical institution, established at Rome, towards 1458, under the pontificate of Pius II., Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini.

This learned and accomplished Pope, whose fame as a literary man was already established throughout Europe, who had been crowned with laurel by Frederic III., and employed by him in the most difficult and honourable missions, who had played a part of paramount importance during the contests between that emperor and Pope Eugenius IV., with more credit, perhaps, to his learning than to his character—became, at his accession, the patron of those studies to which he owed his promotion.

A number of learned scholars and antiquarians was then flourishing at Rome, a set of harmless but extravagant enthusiasts—who rebaptized themselves to assume the most sonorous names of classical latinity, banqueted after the Roman fashion, reclining on their couches, swore by the gods, as if they had never heard of the New Testament, and belonged, in fact, no more to their age than the books among which their life was spent.

Such were the founders of the Roman academy. Pomponius Lætus, Callimachus Experiens, Platina, and others, all the friends and fellow-labourers of Pius, universally revered and cherished by their contemporaries.*

But Pius died at Ancona in 1468, among the cares of his naval armament against the Turks, and his throne was filled by a man of an entirely opposite nature.

Paul II., an ignorant, bigoted monk, alarmed by the pagan tone of their academical mimicries, deemed it due to the dignity of his holy ministry to put an end to their proceedings. This was the first instance of a religious persecution of learning, and the example of Paul II. found but too frequent and zealous imitators. The academicians were thrown into prisons and put to the torture, under the most grievous charges of heresy and infidelity. Lætus, who had taken refuge at Venice, was dragged in chains to Rome, to share the fate of his asso-

* Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, born at Siena, 1445; raised to the pontificate, 1458; died, 1464. First edition of his works, Bale, 1571.—Julius Pomponius Lætus, born at Naples, of the noble house of Sanseverino; persecuted at Rome, 1468; died, 1498. Works printed, Mentz, 1521.—Platina, Bartolommeo Scacchi, from Piadena, born, 1421; Librarian to the Vatican under Sixtus IV., 1475; died, 1481. His famous work, "Vitæ summorum Pontificum," Venice, 1489.

ciates; one of them, a promising youth, expired under the infliction of torture. The bloody pope himself conducted the trial, and, though no proof of guilt could be brought against them, never relented from his blind ferocity until his death came to the rescue of his prisoners.

Sixtus IV. amply proclaimed the injustice of his predecessor by releasing his victims, and restoring them to their peaceful pursuits.

But, whilst we admit that the victims of Paul II. were really innocent of the crimes imputed to them, and granting that their affectation of pagan manners and feelings was to be treated merely as a puerile folly, we must also confess that other literati of that age entertained and promulgated doctrines openly hostile to the temporal supremacy, as well as the infallibility of the Popes of Rome; and that others lived and wrote in open violation of all principles of religion and morals.

I had already occasion to mention how Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and many of their contemporaries, either actuated by the political bias of Ghibelinism, or indignant at the flagrant venality, corruption, and licentiousness, prevailing at the courts of Rome and Avignon, or in accordance with the wild speculations of

a wild, inquisitive age, indulged in bitter invectives against the papal power, and sometimes even dwelt with a mixture of jest and earnest on topics of dangerous controversy respecting the Christian dogma itself.

This spirit of doubt and inquiry increased with the promotion and diffusion of learning.

The frequent intercourse with able and eloquent partisans of Greek heresies, or with deeply learned Jews and Mahometans, the cold and cavilling spirit of Aristotelian philosophy, an unbounded deference to the opinions and maxims of the sages of antiquity, the loose and voluptuous life of the highest dignitaries of the church, the gross superstition of the brutified mass of believers, in the lowest orders—had engendered a secret tendency towards scepticism, which was gradually to undermine the rock on which lay the foundation of the papal throne, and prepare the world for that invaluable but high-purchased blessing of freedom of thought.

Among the most professed adversaries of the temporal power of the popes, was Lorenzo Valla, the master and friend of Lorenzo de Medici, and one of the most active instruments in the restoration of classicism. His able refutation of the papal rights, such as founded

on the forged gift of Constantine, did not prevent Nicholas V., and his successors, in so great a reverence learning was still held—from bestowing upon its author frequent bounties, and raising him to important ecclesiastical dignities.*

But Valla, Poggio, Filelfo, and their friends and enemies, besides their more than enthusiastic bent towards paganism and religious apathy, besides their unchristian rancour and animosity, were also liable to the more serious charge of unbounded profligacy, both shamelessly displayed in their writings, and in their private manners through life.

I have already adverted to the necessity of mistrusting calumnies brought against each other by those angry disputants in the heat of controversy: we must with equal charity hope that their moral principles were sounder than the portrait which they left of themselves in their works would induce us to believe. For, although it is universally agreed that a book is a reflection of the author's mind, yet there is

* Lorenzo Valla, born at Rome, 1400; died at Rome, 1457. His works: "De rebus gestis a Ferdinando Aragonum rege lib. iii.;" "Hispania illustrata;" "Elegantiæ linguæ Latinæ;" etc.

always a petty malignity, inherent in human nature, a fondness for witty display, a desire of saying always something new and odd and piquant, which oftentimes silences the scruples of a rigid conscience, and suffers humour to prevail over principle.

Thus, notwithstanding the fourteen illegitimate children which Poggio—an apostolical secretary—laid to the charge of the community of Florence, and those that Valla—a canon of St. John of Lateran—bequeathed to the munificence of his liberal patron, we are yet inclined to hope that the morals of those writers were not so utterly relaxed as would appear from the "Facetiæ" of Poggio, or the "Hermaphroditus," of Beccatelli.

The self-respect and austerity of early printers prevented them from degrading their types by the publication of those infamous productions. But during the ravages of the French revolution, those works were removed from the dark shelves of the Laurentian library to be published at Paris, in 1791, "the editor," adds Ginguené, "probably feeling assured that the morals of his country were so confirmed, as to have nothing to fear."

But, notwithstanding the general ardour of that age for learned pursuits, and the encou-

ragement of popular applause and princely munificence, the study of classical languages was still in its infancy. The translations from Greek by Traversaro, Filelfo, and others, were far from displaying a profound acquaintance with that language to which their life was consecrated; whilst the Latin writings even of Valla and Poggio, though, on the whole, more correct and accurate than those of Petrarch, still bear deep traces of that barbarism from which they struggled to emerge.

Latin was only perfectly written, Greek and Hebrew were only thoroughly understood, by the scholars of the following generation. The age of plodding erudition was followed by the age of true scholarship. What the friends of Cosmo de Medici only sowed, was reaped by the familiars of Lorenzo.

It was only during the latest part of the fifteenth, and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, that the efforts of Politiano at Florence, of Pontano and Sannazzaro at Naples, of Bembo and Sadoleto at Venice and Rome, brought about what was called the second age of the Latin language. It was when Aldus, himself a scholar, and first of a family of scholars, opened, in 1500, a new academy at Venice, and, with the aid of its members,

commenced that edition of the classics, that stands unmatched among typographical undertakings; when Aldus himself and his son Paulus Manutius were among the most elegant writers, as well as the staunchest partizans of the language of Rome; when Politiano's translation of Herodian was entitled to become a classical work, and his Greek epigrams could rank among the best in the Anthologia, when the hexameters of Fracastoro's "Syphilis," and of Sannazzaro's "De Partu Virginis," could stand the parallel of Lucan and Statius, if not of Virgil; it was then, I said, that the work of Petrarch could be considered as definitely accomplished, and the war waged by erudition against time crowned with lasting success.*

* Angelo Politiano, born at Monte Pulciano, 1454; introduced to the court of Lorenzo de Medici, 1468; died, 1492. Complete edition of his works, Paris, 1512.—Joviano Pontano, born at Cereto, Umbria, 1426; died, 1503. His works printed, 1538.—Actio Sincero Sannazzaro, born at Naples, 1458; died, 1530. "De Partu Virginis," printed at Naples, 1526; "Arcadia," Naples, 1563.—Pietro Bembo, born at Venice, 1470; apostolical secretary to Leo X., 1513; a cardinal by appointment of Paul III., 1534; died, 1547. Complete edition of his Latin works, Venice, 1729. "Asolani," Venice, Aldus, 1505. "Prose," 1525. History of Venice in Latin and Italian.—Jacopo Sadoleto, born at Modena, 1477; secretary to Leo X., 1513; to Clement VII., 1523; cardinal

This noble achievement, which the Italian scholars obtained by their endeavours to reproduce in their own writings the style of ancient Rome—by what might otherwise be considered in itself as a mere waste of time—was of even a greater importance than it was given to them to foresee. For, it cannot be denied, that without this apparently retrograde spirit of imitation, without this almost idolatrous veneration that induced them to identify themselves with the dead, without, as they did, writing, talking, thinking, and breathing but Greek and Latin, they would not have bestowed upon us, their descendants, all that we know about the social order of Greece and Rome; all that vast inheritance of ancient genius, wisdom and policy from which our own social progress received such a vital impulse.

Meanwhile that country, in which learning had reached so high a degree of popularity and of political importance, began to exercise its influence upon the neighbouring nations.

The political discontents occasioned by the sudden vicissitudes of the Italian republics, a

under Paul III., 1536; died, 1547. Edition of his works, Mentz, 1607.—Fracastoro, a poet and a physician, born at Verona, 1483; died 1553. The "Syphilis" first printed, 1521.

natural spirit of adventure and learned research, the diplomatic missions especially from Florence, Venice, and Rome, to which, as to all important offices, men of learning were exclusively appointed, drew to the courts of France, England, and Germany a vast number of conspicuous Italian scholars, who never failed to be received with the warmest friendship, and not unfrequently were prevailed upon to settle abroad.

From the age of Boniface VIII., who received at his court at the same epoch, in 1300, ambassadors from sixteen different European powers, all natives of Florence, Italians were to be found in high credit at every court.

On the other side, the frequency of wars and feudal dissensions, the anarchic condition of the social system in the north of Europe, the inducement of a bright sky and delightful climate, and above all, the fame of superior refinement, the comforts and luxuries of the Italian cities, operated as irresistible arguments to bring English, French, and German students into Italy, who continued to repair to the classical academies of Florence and Rome, as young artists from the same countries are now to be seen crowding the Pitti and Vatican galleries.

The most accomplished monarchs vied with the pontiffs and princes of Italy in their liberal encouragement of literature.

Politiano numbered several crowned heads among his assiduous correspondents, especially the good and great Matthias Corvinus of Hungary, the whole of whose long reign was spent in strenuous and yet ineffectual endeavours to dissipate the deep ignorance in which his country was yet involved.

Thus it was that Grocyn and Lineacre in England, Erasmus and Buddæus in Germany, were enabled to lay the basis of those classical schools in the North, which were soon to leave the Italian masters far behind in every branch of erudition.

The taste of the Italians for classical lore, and their proficiency in the study of the dead languages, has ever since the age of Lorenzo de Medici, or of Leo X., been on its decline.

The disinclination of that southern people for the serious and sedulous application which such studies necessarily require, had already caused Latin to fall into neglect and desuetude, in proportion as it became an all-absorbing object of attention in England and Germany, when during the presumptuous era of the last French invasion, that language was officially proscribed from the schools.

Italy has, since that time, partly recovered from that extreme of absurdity; Latin is still one of the vital branches of education in all Catholic seminaries. Still the day is long since past when a Roman abate could recite extemporary verses before a delighted audience, and it is now rare, in the land of Bembo and Pontano, to find a scholar capable of writing tolerable Latin. The performance of one of Plautus's or Terence's plays, such as given by the Eton or Westminster boys, would be a rare spectacle in an Italian university.

The interest that the people even of the lowest orders seemed to take in the cause of science and literature during the fifteenth century is only to be accounted for by the total want of easier sources of enjoyment.

The practice of giving public exhibitions of learning and eloquence, of delivering Latin or Greek dissertations on the most abstruse and recondite subjects, in which Dante is remembered to have distinguished himself, acquired every day a more universal popularity. A set of showy scholars roamed from town to town, walking atlases who carried the contents of a whole library in their heads, indefatigable encyclopedists who mastered every branch of knowledge, and could discourse with plausibility on all topics, and who substituted their

learned disputations for the chivalrous tournaments of olden times.

Of all these monsters of learning from the age of Dante down to the "admirable Crichton," by far the most famous and truly wonderful was the Phœnix of geniuses—Pico della Mirandola.

This extraordinary being, who in the prime of life had courage to renounce the pleasures and vanities of a world, in which his high rank, personal advantages, and uncommon endowments entitled him to take a large share, who burnt his juvenile love poems, and shunned all feminine intercourse to give himself up to the study of a mystical divinity, who, led astray by artful impostors, plunged into the chimera of the Jewish cabbala, and to an immense store of genuine learning, added also not a few of the extravagances of the age, published at Rome in 1486 that unheard of challenge to all the learned of Europe, by which he offered to discourse on nine hundred propositions on all logical, ethical, mathematical, metaphysical, theological, magical, and cabbalistical subjects.

That exhibition, however, never took place. He was obliged to quit Rome, where his enemies denounced him as a teacher of heresy,

and had to fight for it against the church of Rome during the rest of his life.*

This ardour for literary display, which afforded so ample a scope for the gratification of vanity, could not fail to prove attractive to the fair sex. The grave scholars of the fifteenth century were not only encouraged by the smile and applause, but even stimulated by the rivalry of handsome contemporaries, who descended with them into the literary arena and beat them at their own weapons.

Alexandra Scala and Cassandra Fedele were among the learned correspondents of Politiano, who was violently enamoured with one of them, and left in his writings ample testimonials of his admiration for the other. Domitilla Trivulzia delivered Latin orations before thronged assemblies; and Isotta of Verona appeared among the disputants in public controversies; one day the question being propounded, which of our two first parents mostly contributed to deserve their expulsion from Eden—Isotta stood forward for the cause of her sex.

Meanwhile the hour of the great national calamity had struck, and learning was to be involved in its ruin.

* Giovanni Pico della Mirandola born, 1436; a friend of Lorenzo de Medici, Ficino and Politiano; died, 1494. Works: "Heptaplus," "De ente et uno," "Conclusiones," etc.

Lorenzo de Medici, Politiano, and several others of their friends, all young, all nearly at one stroke, were swept off within the space of two years, 1492—1494. Pico della Mirandola died at Florence, on the very day of the triumphal entry of Charles VIII. into that city. The band of French soldiery, and the Florentine populace, justly incensed against the name of Medici, carried their indiscriminate devastation among the treasures of literature and art, that the industry of that family had collected in their palace. Next came the intolerant zeal of Savonarola, who, under pretence of destroying the profane obscenities of the semi-pagan court of Lorenzo, made a bonfire of all that had escaped the Vandalic ravages of the French.

Every town of Italy, Venice excepted, endured similar executions, and even at Venice the din and hurry of war scared the student from his peace-loving pursuits. The Academy of Aldus was dispersed, and his printing establishment broken up.

The profligacy of Alexander VI., and the warlike spirit of Julius II., afforded but a scanty encouragement to the members of the Roman academy, and though Pontano and his associates were able to weather that stormy

season in Naples, still even there, though lingering with more tenacious vitality, learning had received its death wound.

All that the diligence of two generations had laid together for the benefit of the remotest posterity, was once more scattered and trodden during those forty years of confusion and violence.

Some efforts to arrest and counteract the work of destruction were made by Giovanni de Medici, who carried on the papal throne that splendour and taste by which his progenitors had shone in happier times.

The name of Leo X. has been exalted or vituperated with equal exaggeration by the animosity of opposite parties. That name, however, must, whether with good reason or not, stand where it was placed by the consent of after ages,—at the head of the third and last period of the progress of classical literature.

The memory of Leo, as an Italian prince, is disgraced by a system of irresolute, improvident, unprincipled policy; as a Roman pontiff, by a lavish, venal, simoniacal abuse of his sacred ministry; as a private man, by a free indulgence in a wanton and sometimes even vulgar epicurism. But, as a contrast to these

defects, it must be said of him that he called round his throne Bembo and Sadoleto; and if it is true that Ariosto never received from him any thing beyond fair promises and a kiss, and that the pontiff in his fit of ill-humour betrayed an invincible dislike for the proud and unbending Michael Angelo, it would be unjust to deny that he was the constant friend and patron of Raphael; it may be said also that he had perhaps more of affection than respect for his accomplished guests and courtiers, or of regard for their feelings—if we are to believe that his table was usually crowded with base and impudent buffoons, and that he did not hesitate to profane Petrarch's laurel and the Capitol by a mock coronation of his laughing-stocks Querno and Baraballo.

Yet the cares he bestowed on the restoration of the Laurentian library, his liberality to the Roman gymnasium and to the reinstated academy, and the open hospitality with which every man of talent was housed at the Vatican, cannot fail to call forth the praise of posterity.

Unfortunately the disasters of Italy were not yet at an end. All that had been collected and treasured up under Leo's auspices, was again deplorably devastated by the barbarians of the Constable of Bourbon.

Thus the work of destruction was continued down to what was called the pacification of Italy, in 1530, when studies were languidly and despondingly resumed under the scourges of the Spanish tyranny at Milan and Naples, and the Dominican inquisition at Rome.

The universal feeling of national humiliation and bondage, the sudden cessation of civil life, the systematic establishment of a jealous, suspicious, cowardly tyranny, the degraded character of the princes of the reigning houses of Medici, Farnese, and Este, the blasting influence of bigoted pontiffs, by rapid degrees discouraged the Italians from the noble career in which their ancestors had taken the precedence of other nations, and turned their minds to idler but safer pursuits.

The mission of Italy was in the mean time accomplished. The nations who were led, either by ambition or the thirst of plunder, to the desolation of that fated land, carried beyond the Alps the fruits of the labour of Italian scholars as the best spoil of victory.

What had hitherto been the gift and privilege of one people became the common property and heritage of the whole European family.

But more perhaps than to any of the evils of division and vassalage, the decline of literature

in Italy in the latter part of the sixteenth century, is to be attributed to the effects of what was for other nations the happiest revolution—the consequences of the Reformation.

This great and fundamental division of the church, which had been silently prepared by so many different causes during previous ages, but which was determined by the extravagant expenditures of Leo X., and his unscrupulous traffic of indulgences, was, as I have had frequent occasion to say, neither entirely new, nor unfavourably heard of in Italy.

Arnold of Brescia, Dante, Lorenzo Valla, Savonarola, and many other daring spirits, had more than once attempted to open the eyes of the multitude, and to free the Italian mind from the fetters of Catholic despotism. Religious indifference and anarchy had reached its height towards the end of the fifteenth century.

The doctrines of Luther and Calvin encouraging a spirit of free inquiry, could not fail to be warmly received in a country naturally inclined towards them, by the recent memory of its liberal institutions, by its superior refinement and culture. The most sanguine members of the Roman and Neapolitan academies, abandoned their unprofitable disputes concerning Aristotle and Plato, and exercised their

powers in the discussion of the important topics recently started by the German innovators.

The utter relaxation of ecclesiastical discipline, the tolerance, not to say absolute indifference of the two worldly-minded popes of the house of Medici, seemed to give a tacit encouragement to those dangerous doctrines. Some of the most accomplished princes of the age, and not a few even of the highest dignitaries of the church, are believed to have been more or less seduced by the speciousness of Protestant arguments. The Reformation found favour with what Italy had more conspicuous among the higher classes; it numbered among its votaries ladies distinguished by their rank, beauty, and genius. ...For a good number of years the reformed doctrines were promulgated, reformed churches were opened throughout the country, not only without serious opposition, but even with the open approbation of some of the Italian rulers.

But when, at last, the church and its supporters were seriously determined to put an end to the heresy of Luther, by fair means or foul, when the opposite factions were brought into violent collision, and it became a necessity for every state as well as for individuals to come to an open profession of faith, the Italians

were no longer masters of themselves. The whole country lay prostrate at the feet of the armies of Spain, of that power which gave so ample proofs of relentless, sanguinary bigotry. Whatever opinions might have prevailed in Italy friendly to the Protestant faith, they would inevitably have been drowned in blood.

The Council of Trent pronounced its ultimatum, and Italy received it as a law.*

Bold and persevering men occasionally arose, openly asserting their right to abide by what they deemed to be truth. But the Jesuits and Dominicans,† both Spanish institutions, backed by victorious Spanish legions, carried every thing before them by the arguments of fire and sword. The Italians resisted religious persecution with considerable energy, especially at Milan and Naples; the holy office never was suffered to assume in Italy the darkest colours of the Spanish inquisition.

It had power enough, nevertheless, to overcome all opposition.

But, had it been otherwise, had the Italians

* First sitting of the Council of Trent, 1545; removed to Bologna, 1547; recalled to Trent, 1551; dispersed by wars, 1552; reopened, 1561; closed, 1563.

† Bull of Paul III. for the institution of Jesuits, 1540.

not been fettered to their religious yoke by religious circumstances, it is more than doubtful whether the whole nation would ever have embraced Protestantism in its widest sense. To their sceptic irreverence for the awful dogmas of the revelation, by which some of them so far outran Luther and Calvin, and sowed the seeds of Socinianism abroad, the Italians added a timid reluctance to embrace any measure that might bring about a definitive scissure in the church. The consequences of the ancient Greek heresies, and the more recent disorders of the great Western Schism, were still before them, with all their horrors of brotherly rancour and civil bloodshed. They had an instinctive foreboding of the endless divisibility of sects. They knew how easily men are apt to pass from arguments to blows, and they had recently suffered too much from war to be willing to undergo its disasters for the sake of religious opinion.

For a long time events seemed to justify their anxious apprehensions. Every year tidings of nefarious deeds were brought to Italy, from the land where the great cause of religious reformation was debated. Lutherans, Calvinists, Huguenots, Puritans, a hundred sects, appeared arising from blood, drowning

each other in blood, like the warriors springing from the dragon's teeth in ancient mythology. The short-sighted Italians congratulated themselves on their exemption from the evils of Flanders and Germany. They did not foresee that rebellion was in those countries to lead to a close of evil—submission was for them evil without a close!

Religious intolerance led the way to political persecution. The Italian tyrants knew how to enlist the Inquisitors in their cause. Church and state for the first time entered into a close confederacy against learning and truth; an unnatural alliance, against which all the efforts of modern social progress are yet unable to prevail.

The advancement of the fine arts was analogous, as it was contemporaneous with the promotion of the interests of learning. From the earliest epoch of the emancipation of the Lombard and Tuscan cities, it had been the pride of those sober and frugal republicans to consecrate the best part of their increasing wealth to the erection of lofty buildings, destined for their place of worship, or for the residence of their municipal magistrates. A rude and severe, but grand and lofty Gothic style presided over those edifices, happily blended,

especially in the sea-ports—at Venice, Genoa, and Pisa—with ornament in the Oriental taste, imported by their navigators from the models of Greek and Saracenic structures.

Such was the architecture of the Middle Ages in Italy, sufficient in itself and without the aid of extraneous elements, to overawe the judgment of a more refined, but neither more fecund nor more ingenious posterity. The town halls and cathedrals still standing in almost every town of Northern Italy, bearing dates of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the baptisteries of Pisa, Florence, and Parma, and the unparalleled Campo Santo, almost give us reason to regret that that primeval national taste was not followed up to its utmost degree of improvement.

Sculpture in that age, scarcely a separate art, proceeded hand-in-hand with architecture; and the earliest specimens of the three Pisan artists, especially the staid and solemn, but majestically sublime figures of the pulpit in the baptistery at Pisa, are the productions of a new and primitive, but it would be blasphemy to say, infant art.*

* Niccolo and Giovanni Pisano flourished early in the thirteenth century.—Andrea Pisano flourished towards 1300.—Arnolfo di Lapo, built the Palazzo della Signoria at Florence, 1298.—Laying of the first stone of the Cathedral of Florence, 1289.

Still greater wonders were soon to be performed in Florence. There the austere genius of Arnolfo di Lapo had given the ancient towns and palaces a rigid—almost a sombre aspect. The greatest of his conceptions—the wide and gloomy aisles of what was to be "the finest cathedral in the world," lay still after two centuries unroofed and unfinished; but by their side rose the gay, light, and harmonious belfry of Giotto; and, opposite, the skill of Ghiberti had decorated the old San Giovanni with his high-finished "gates of Paradise."

Painting could hardly boast of equally rapid progress. The works of the earliest Pisan and Siennese masters, no less than those of Cimabue and Giotto, though certainly recommendable by that same naïve and truly angelic grace that characterised the earliest specimens of sculpture, still would induce us to believe that painting was in a much less advanced state than the sister arts, perhaps because it is susceptible of a higher degree of perfection.*

But art soared a much more significant flight in Florence when it felt the impulse of the sovereign mind of Filippo Brunelleschi.†

* Cimabue born, 1240; died, 1300.—Giotto born, 1276; died, 1336.

† Brunelleschi, born at Florence, 1377; accomplished his great work of the Cathedral of Florence, 1426; died, 1446.

This rare man, who alone was equal to the task of carrying into execution the plan of the gigantic Arnolfo, and by raising the dome of the Florentine cathedral, outdid, by a wide interval, the greatest efforts of antiquity, who crowned his native town with so many other splendid edifices, is perhaps better than any of his successors, not excepting even Michael Angelo himself, entitled to the appellation of creator of Italian art. What Brunelleschi accomplished in architecture, his contemporaries Masaccio, Ghiberti, and Donatello did for painting and sculpture.*

Hitherto, art was in Italy, as well as literature, national, republican, romantic, original. It had arisen from the wants and in accordance with the spirit of the age. It bore the marks of a half-Roman, half-German, half-Oriental civilisation. It belonged to the people, and sought for no better encouragement than the suffrage of popular approbation.

The people was a better patron of genius than the most liberal princes.

The paintings of Cimabue were removed to their destination to the sound of triumphal

* Masaccio born, 1402; died, 1443.—Ghiberti born, 1378; died about 1455.—Donatello born, 1383; died, 1466.

music, followed by the whole population drawn up in a solemn procession. Arnolfo was ordered by the magistrates to spare no expense, but build them a church that should have no equal in the world; whilst Cosmo, the most generous lover of art, suffered his economy, or, perhaps his political discretion, to interfere with his patronal munificence, and caused Brunelleschi to burn the rejected design of his palace, out of vexation and disappointment.

Meanwhile the new turn that literature had taken in Italy, in consequence of the newly awakened ardour for the works of antiquity, extended its influence over the productions of art.

Already, during the fourteenth century, the example of classical scholars had directed public attention towards the monuments of antiquity. Cola da Rienzi is well known to have derived his revolutionary arguments from the interpretation of ancient inscriptions, and from the sublime records graven on the ruins of the great buildings of Rome. He and his friends Petrarch and Coluccio Salutato were as diligent in the collection of ancient gems and medals, as in their search after classical manuscripts.

Their example could not be lost upon the scholars of the following century. Poggio

Bracciolini, and, at his suggestion, Cosmo de Medici, Niccolò Niccoli, and other illustrious private men, gave origin to what became afterwards the boast of princely museums. The gallery of statues and other antiquities belonging to Lorenzo de Medici, and the academy annexed to it, are said to have been the great school where, with many others, young Michael Angelo's genius was formed.*

Certainly he is to be considered as the first

* Michael Angelo Buonarrotti, born March 6, 1474; a pupil of Ghirlandaio, 1488; quitted Florence, 1494; returned, 1498; his cartoons of the war of Pisa, 1500; invited to Rome by Julius II., 1505; monument of Julius and statue of Moses, 1506; exhibition of his works in the Sixtine Chapel, November 1, 1514; sculptures in the vestry of San Lorenzo, 1523; employed in works of fortification during the siege of Florence, 1527—1530; the Last Judgment finished, 1541; directed the works of St. Peter, 1534—1563; died February 17, 1564.—Leonardo da Vinci born, 1443; invited to the court of Milan by Ludovico il Moro, 1483; painting of the Last Supper, 1498; repaired to Florence, 1499; cartoons of the wars of Pisa, 1503; invited to Rome by Leo, 1513; invited to France by Francis I., 1515; died in the king's arms at Fontainebleau, 1520.—Raphael Sanzio born at Urbino, March 28, 1483; a pupil of Perugino, 1496; brought into contact with Michael Angelo and Leonardo, at Florence, 1502; invited to Rome by Julius II., 1508; his paintings in the Vatican finished, 1517; the Transfiguration, 1520; died April 7, 1520.—Bramante born at Urbino, 1444; employed at Rome by Alexander VI., 1500; the Loggie of the Vatican, 1503—1513; laying of the first stone of St. Peter's, 1508; death of Bramante, 1514.

author of that great revolution that substituted modern for mediæval, classical for romantic art. Before him Brunelleschi had indeed visited the remains of Roman monuments, and profited by the lessons of antiquity. But, under Michael Angelo, the past prevailed altogether over the present. He founded modern Italy immediately on the ruins of ancient Rome, effacing the memory of the middle ages. With a mind as vast and free as that of Dante, of whom he was the warmest admirer, he however obeyed the influence of Petrarch. Had he been differently educated, St. Peter's at Rome would have had all the originality of the Divine Comedy. In consistency with his proud and independent genius his work was indeed rather that of emulation than imitation. But his followers did not or could not understand him. Their pride aimed no higher than to copy with servility those models which their master had left far behind.

Michael Angelo seemed to be aware that his native town was no favourable stage where he could appear to advantage: as a painter in his younger days, when he entered the lists as the competitor of Leonardo da Vinci, or a sculptor, later in life, when he worked at the vestry of San Lorenzo, we find Michael Angelo at Florence.

But as an architect Arnolfo and Brunelleschi allowed him no hope of doing better. He repaired to Rome, and raised to the divinity "a firmament of marble."

There reigned then at Rome a man endowed with an ardent, irritable temper, with a stern and powerful will, capable of high undertakings, though governed by sudden and unequal impulses. The greatest if not the holiest of popes, Julius II.

Michael Angelo found him all exulting in his recent discovery of the group of Laocoon, and anxiously watching over the works of the Vatican which, since the time of Nicholas V., had been successively enlarged in a magnificent scale, and to which Julius's favourite architect, Bramante, was now adding his stupendous *Loggie*, and giving the last finish.

The daring views of Michael Angelo's genius inflamed the imagination of the generous pope, who was soon determined on the demolition of the old metropolitan church of Christendom, and, in open defiance of the superstitious veneration attached to that august pile, levelled it to the ground, and laid the first stone for the erection of the "eighth wonder of the world."

The design of the new Basilica and its execution was intrusted to Bramante, who was

fully equal to his task; but the building was not accomplished until long after the death of Julius and his architect, and its principal achievement was the work of him who had inspired its first thought.

The vastness of Julius' enterprising genius, and the providential combination of three such minds as Bramante, Michael Angelo and Raphael, distinguished the pontificate of Julius and of his successor Leo X. as the epoch of the triumph of modern art. Its most admired monuments were either produced or conceived during that short interval of twenty years, and united within the narrow space of one favourite spot—a church and a palace.

That palace and that church were equally meant as trophies of Catholicism in its height of prosperity; but they proved to be the immediate source of its dissolution, and marked the commencement of a decline which will eventually end in its utter downfal.

Art in Italy is necessarily identified with the name of him who equally excelled in all its branches. An Italian cannot go so far,—cannot by the present dejection of his country feel so downcast and humbled, that he may not raise his head among strangers and say, "I was born in the land of Michael Angelo!"

As a painter Leonardo had done wonders at Milan ere Michael Angelo was known in Florence, nor would he have easily yielded to his competitor, had he not been utterly absorbed in his important scientific pursuits. As an architect, Brunelleschi can stand a parallel with Buonarrotti in his proudest moments. In sculpture also much had been done by those whom he condescended to acknowledge as his masters. But his age seemed imbued with the great artist's spirit. The noblest minds seemed to catch fire by his contact. Before him art was not yet determined on any definite course—after him it seemed as if nothing remained, but either to complete what he had left unachieved, or to follow at a great distance in his footsteps.

In order to bow before Michael Angelo's genius, it is not necessary to see St. Peter, the Moses, or the Last Judgment. His fame rests upon something more solid than even those unmatched but not imperishable monuments. The influence that the uprightness, energy, and loftiness of his character exercised on his and the following ages, that noble pride by which he was enabled to withstand the impatience and violence of Julius, the meanness and presumption of Leo, are sufficient to send his name down

to the latest posterity—until, at least, men be utterly dead to the spectacle of mental excellence and moral greatness.

"We bow
To that supreme intelligence
By whom our mortal kind
Was made to bear so deep the stamp
Of his creative mind."—MANZONI.

CHAPTER II.

ARIOSTO.

Reaction in favour of Italian Literature—Lorenzo de Medici —Politiano—Pulci—The house of Este—Chivalrous Poetry—The Morgante—Boiardo—The Orlando Innamorato —Ariosto—His life and character—The Orlando Furioso —Revival of chivalrous spirit.

THE work of erudition had no sooner been accomplished by the scholars of the fifteenth century, than the Italians were gradually brought back to the cultivation of their national language, and the literature of the age of Dante. This revolution, which was to restore the living language on its throne, and give it its proper ascendancy over the dead, is due to the influence of princes, and arose in accordance with princely views. From the earliest moment of his accession, to the undefined but undisputed supremacy, that his family had held in Florence during two generations, Lorenzo

de Medici was made aware of the necessity of following the line of policy traced out by the wisdom of his grandfather, Cosmo, that of courting the people. The serious disturbances by which the short reign of his father, Piero, had been frequently agitated, the sudden attack of Prato on the very outset of his own and of his brother's political career, the fatal conspiracy of the Pazzi, to which this last had fallen a victim, and from which he had himself so narrowly escaped, only to find himself engaged in an unequal war against all the powers of Italy, had easily convinced him that his sovereignty was not altogether based on granite.

Hence to a cautious and almost hypocritical display of popular manners and principles, to a jealous care with which he watched to the protection of the external forms of a democratic government, and affected, and recommended to his sons to assume, the rank and style of private citizens; Lorenzo knew how to add a taste and munificence, which did not slightly contribute to the success of those ambitious schemes, which the heirs of Cosmo were so perseveringly pursuing.

Hence all those shows and festivals, which were generally announced in the name of the republic, but of which the coffers of his bankers invariably defrayed the expenses, the tour-

naments, now for the first time after a long interval revived in republican Italy, the opening of a theatre, an unexampled event since the fall of Rome, and all those numberless dances, masquerades and processions, of which a great number are still celebrated in Florence,—engendered among the people, or encouraged that dissipation and indolence, which could best fit them for the yoke insensibly laid on their neck.

The visit of the vain and giddy despot Galeazzo Sforza to Florence in 1471, the prodigal waste of his numerous retinue, their drunken riots, in which the populace was suffered to join them—the contagious example of courtly luxury and licentiousness, humbled whilst it dazzled the frugal Florentines. It was, therefore, with a feeling of complacency and gratitude that they saw, even the attention of the brutal Milanese lord attracted by the objects of art and antiquity, in which the Medici prided themselves, and which was all that Florence could oppose to the glittering pageantry of their guest.

So it was that the fiercest population in Italy was schooled to servitude. Those public games and spectacles, the literary and artistical exhibitions with which they were daily entertained, were for the Florentines the mess of pottage,

for the sake of which they gave up their intellectual birthright.

Intent as he was to study the inclination of a naturally acute and refined people, Lorenzo was soon aware that, notwithstanding the interest that the lowest classes apparently took in the progress of learning, and the attention they paid to endless dissertations in a dead language, and on dead subjects; much more could be expected by appealing more directly to their sympathies, and bringing those entertainments to the level of their understandings.

The poetry of a happier age, the long forgotten poetry of Dante and Petrarch, remained still, though in a state of utter degradation, among the people; it was sung or recited by strolling minstrels with universal delight to the multitude. That poetry the Medici resolved to revive. Lorenzo himself, and after his example his young friends Politiano and Pulci, made themselves the people's minstrels—and those first specimens of epic and chivalrous poems, whether designedly or not, became one of the efficient instruments, by which the Florentines were piped and danced into servitude.

It would be great injustice to deny Lorenzo de Medici the credit of a very superior taste and manifold accomplishments, as well as uncommon amiableness and liberality of character,

or to dispute the influence he exercised on the general progress of letters and arts. Still his claims on our admiration and gratitude have been perhaps exaggerated, by the attachment of his contemporaries, and dwelt upon with unaccountable partiality even in later ages.

Had not Italy been otherwise prepared for a reaction in favour of her national language, it is doubtful whether his influence had been sufficient to bring it about. The popular songs of Lorenzo, were most probably not meant to survive the circumstance that gave them birth. Politiano silenced his Italian muse, even before his mind had reached its maturity, and the verses of Pulci were written in too great a haste to be seriously intended as literary performances.

The love poems of Lorenzo do not soar above the common level of mediocrity; his carnival songs and rural stanzas, though more spontaneous and original, make us painfully aware how deplorably the Italian language had degenerated from the ease, elegance, and purity of Petrarch.

Politiano's verses, written, as they were, at an earlier date, were more exquisitely finished as to style. That is, however, all that can be said in their favour. Politiano, who exercised the highest authority among the scholars of his

age, who left at his death so brilliant a reputation, scarcely tarnished by the vague accusations that have been raised against his memory as to the soundness of his morals—never wrote Italian poetry after the age of sixteen. His famous "Stanze," no less than the formless embryo of a drama, the "Orfeo," which he wrote in two days, though evidently the works of a poet, still bear evident marks of premature age, and the very exuberance and luxuriance of his fancy render the perusal of these two fragments, short as they are, considerably fatiguing.

Pulci, the youngest of three brothers, all poets,* accomplished a greater task, and, as it proved, more important for its consequences by his chivalro-heroi-comic poem, "Il Morgante." This work, which had been rather freely exalted by the Florentines in the days of their provincial prejudices of the Della Crusca academy, and which, even in later times, found favour with men of eminent genius, is, however, neither recommendable for its plan, episodes, or characters, nor yet, whatever may be said of its pure Tuscan, for its style. It is a vile, vulgar performance, which had its origin among the orgies of a dissolute court, disgusting for

* Luigi Pulci born 1432; died, 1487. Il Morgante Maggiore. Venice, 1488.

its strange mixture of mock bigotry and scoffing irreligion, an unrelieved exhibition of ignoble, bacchanalian sensualism.

Still by those first attempts of the court of Medici, Italian poetry was recalled from the public square to the palace of princes, and though, at first, merely regarded as an object of idle pastime, it had power to turn the attention of Italian scholars to the works of the master minds of the preceding ages, and eventually to awaken Italian genius from its centennial slumbers.

Thus the commentary on the Divine Comedy by Christopher Landino, one of the tutors of Lorenzo,* gives us reason to believe that the name of Dante was not utterly forgotten in that age; and the lives of that poet and of Petrarch, which had been written in Italian by Leonardo Aretino, under Cosmo de Medici, and were brought into life soon after the age of Lorenzo, may be considered as a symptom of the tendency of that epoch towards the national literature.

Yet the revolution could not be considered as fully accomplished before the beginning of

* Christoforo Landino, born at Florence, 1424; appointed instructor of Lorenzo and Juliano, 1457; Florentine secretary, 1489; died, 1504. Disputationum Camaldulentium, lib. iv. Florence, 1480.

the sixteenth century, when those very men, who had been more successful in their specimens of Latin versification, especially Bembo and Sannazzaro seemed finally made aware that all the works of imagination, being necessarily the result of immediate inspiration, can only be dictated in that language which most immediately recurs to the writer's mind, and that, however laborious studies may render a dead language a second nature to the assiduous scholar, yet this can only be obtained by forcing his mind into a different channel of thought, and giving his living images all the chill and rigidity of death.

The "Arcadia" of Sannazzaro and the "Asolani" of Bembo, cold and languid productions as they appear to us, had, however, a brilliant success in other ages, and mainly contributed to the revival of Italian literature. Still, so universally perverted were the notions of the age, that Bembo did not hesitate to advise Ariosto to write his poem in Latin, and was himself with great reluctance, persuaded, towards the close of his life, to translate into Italian his history of Venice, written by him originally in that language which alone he deemed fit for grave subjects.

Nevertheless, Italian poetry began to be cultivated with renovated ardour. The classics of

Greece and Rome were rendered into the vernacular language, the absurdity of performing Latin dramas on the stage became apparent, and Italian literature in every branch was started afresh into life. The example of the Medici was eagerly followed by other princes Poets and improvisatori of the highest rank roamed from court to court in imitation of the troubadours of chivalrous times. They were sure of the warmest welcome wherever they appeared. The people shut up their shops, and strewed the streets with garlands and flowers. The halls or churches where their exhibitions took place were crowded to suffocation. The poet was received with loud acclamation, and saluted with such high titles as the Unique, the Divine.

But this popular reaction in favour of Italian was soon to receive the sanction of the hand of genius. The revolution that had commenced under the patronage of the house of Medici was to be carried to its perfection at the court of Ferrara.

The house of Este had reached its height of prosperity at the epoch of the earliest national calamities. Descended from one of the northern families which settled in Italy during the darkest period of the middle ages, the Este traced their lineal descent up to the times of Charle-

magne. They had taken advantage of the frequent dissensions between the popes and the German emperors of the houses of Saxony and Swabia, and acquired wide dominions in Lunigiana, and the March of Treviso, where the castle of Este, their family residence, was situated. Towards the middle of the eleventh century, that family had been connected by marriages with the Guelphs of Bavaria, and one of the name of Este was eventually to become the common source, from which sprung the illustrious houses of Brunswick and Hanover.

The Este had warmly espoused the Guelph party, during the wars of the Lombard League, and, according to the line of policy followed by the nobility of that age, they had often aspired and had been raised to the supreme magistracies at Padua, and in other Lombard free towns.

Towards the year 1200, Azzo V., Marquis of Este, married Marchesella degli Adelardi, daughter of one of the most conspicuous Guelphs at Ferrara, where the influence of the house of Este was thus first established.

The Este found themselves soon afterwards engaged in long struggles against Salinguerra, a valiant champion of the Ferrarese Ghibelines, during the stormy reigns of Otho IV. and Frederic II. Already since 1208 the Ferrarese,

harassed by endless civil contests had invested Azzo VI. with the supreme power; thus giving the first example in Italy of a town preferring a peaceful servitude to the enjoyment of a stormy and dangerous freedom. But the valour of Frederic II. and his partizans had since reduced the Este to the last extremities.

At last, after the death of Frederic, Azzo VII. took Salinguerra a prisoner by treason, and put himself at the head of the crusade that was preached against Ezzelino, the bloody lieutenant of Frederic, routed him at Cassano, and had the largest share of the spoils. (1259.)

Not long afterwards, when the pope armed Charles of Anjou to the extermination of the last Swabians, the Este were rewarded for their co-operation by the dominion of Reggio and Modena.

The success of that family is not so much to be attributed to the valour of its members as to their ambi-dexterous policy, to their opportune defections from the empire to the church, and from the Guelphs to the Ghibelines. The annals of the house of Este, however gilded over by the mythological traditions of Ariosto and Tasso, and by the all but historical narrative of Giambattista Pigna, the court-historiographer, are stained by the memory of base treasons and startling crimes. Two of the

reigning princes died by poison, another cleared his way to the throne by a double fratricide; and even Nicholas III., one of the noblest princes of his age, usurped the sovereignty of Parma by the murder of Ottobon Terzo, who had violently taken that city from the heirs of Gian Galeazzo Visconti. That same prince,—for the inspired strains of the poet have recently brought fresh arguments against the hero's fame,—obscured the glory of an otherwise irreproachable reign by the doleful tragedy of Parisina.

From Nicholas III., who reigned from 1393 to 1441, dates the first epoch of the patronage granted by the house of Este to the cultivators of literature. To this prince alone we are indebted for the foundation of two universities at Ferrara and Parma; Guarino da Verona and Giovanni Aurispa met with the most flattering reception at his court. To them he trusted the education of his children, Lionello and Borso, who, although illegitimate, reigned after him with the sanction of the pope, and to the prejudice of the lawful heir.

Lionello and Borso were reputed the most generous and accomplished princes in the country. That sovereignty which their ancestors had hitherto only established by usurpation, received, at last, the sanction of the

emperor Frederic III., and Pope Paul II., by whom Borso was invested with the titles of Duke of Modena and Reggio in 1452, and of Ferrara in 1471.

Hercules I., the legitimate son of Nicholas III., and successor of Borso, after having secured his throne by putting to death his brother's sons, engaged in long, unequal contests against Rome, Venice, and Naples, from which he retreated with great loss. Towards the close of his reign his warlike spirit had considerably abated, and when the supreme hour of Italy had struck, at the epoch of the invasion of Charles VIII., Hercules protected his states by an armed neutrality, which allowed him leisure for literary pursuits.

His court became a refuge for the exiles of Lombardy and Tuscany. Boiardo was his friend and favourite. Francesco Bello had a share in his hospitality, and the young Ariosto was attached to his suite.

The splendour that the court of Ferrara had thus acquired, during four successive generations, had reached its highest degree at the beginning of the reign of Alphonso I. in 1505. Alphonso's second wife was Lucretia Borgia, the too famous daughter of Alexander VI. Whatever may be said of this fatal woman's conduct at the court of the Pope, of her criminal

intercourse with her father and brother, of her deeds of murder and poison—since even Lucretia has found in our days more than one advocate—she certainly lived a decent life after her third marriage, in Ferrara. She became the best ornament of her husband's court, and vied with him in that display of splendour and magnificence which crowded the halls of the ducal palace with the choicest chivalry and the noblest geniuses of Italy.

Alphonso was soon, however, involved in the wars of those times. In 1509, he joined Louis XII. of France, Pope Julius II. and Maximilian of Austria in the league of Cambray, anxious to avenge the injuries that his predecessors had endured from Venice. He persevered in his hostilities, even when that republic had come to a reconciliation with the pope, and when Julius had turned all the power of the holy league against the French his former allies.

After the battle of Ravenna, Alphonso was, therefore, exposed to the resentment of Venice and Rome; a mighty armament from the Adriatic sailed up the Po to the destruction of his capital, whilst Julius himself took the field against him. The Duke stood his ground as he best could. The Venetian fleet was routed and dispersed, and the death of the implacable pope soon relieved him from his immediate apprehensions.

He found, however, no better friends at Rome in the two popes of the house of Medici, nor did he rest tranquilly on his throne till after the coronation of Charles V. in 1531, when he was solemnly reinvested with the possession of his dominions.

Besides these external disturbances domestic calamities contributed to agitate the reign of Alphonso.

Cardinal Hippolito, the Duke's brother, in a fit of jealousy of one of his illegitimate brothers, Julio, ordered his eyes, of which a lady of Ferrara had, in an evil hour, spoken with all the warmth of feminine enthusiasm, to be torn from their sockets. This act of unheard-of cruelty was left unpunished; but Ferdinand, another of Hercules' natural children, espousing the cause of his bereaved brother, entered with him into a conspiracy, directed to dethrone Alphonso and take full vengeance on the Cardinal. The plot was discovered, and the conspirators were condemned to die a traitor's death. But, on the very scaffold, when the axe was suspended on their heads, Alphonso's clemency changed their doom into that of perpetual inprisonment. Ferdinand died in 1540, but Julio was living still in 1570, when he was released by Alphonso's successor, after fifty-four years of captivity.

The reigns of Hercules and Alphonso are signalized as the golden age of chivalrous poetry.

The chivalrous romances of northern France, no less than the amatory verses of the Provençal troubadours, had, as I have mentioned elsewhere, made their way into Italy from their earliest origin. The frequent allusions to some of the most famous heroes of the round table and the paladins of Charlemagne, occurring in the Divine Comedy, are more than sufficient to show that such subjects were quite familiar in Italy in the age of Dante. During the following period the prevalence of democratic ideas, and the study of the works of antiquity, had thrown those rude legends into comparative insignificance. Still what remains in our days of some of them, such as "I reali di Francia," "la Spagna," "Buovo d'Antona," etc., probably written towards the beginning of the fifteenth century, are an irrefragable proof that such performances still found favour in the eyes of the multitude, when Pulci first conceived the idea of introducing a composition of a similar nature to the attention of Lorenzo de Medici and Lucretia Tornabuoni, his mother, to enliven their guests at the close of their sumptuous banquets.

The scene of "Morgante Maggiore" is laid at the court of Charlemagne, and the main

catastrophe consists of that famous rout of Roncevalles, where Orlando and the flower of the French paladins found their death.

But neither the poet nor his audience were calculated to enter into the true spirit of chivalrous poetry. At the close of the fifteenth century the belief in the marvellous had considerably abated. The long extinction of the feudal orders, the long prevalence of burgherish habits, the active pursuits of commerce and industry had, especially in Florence, extinguished those lofty ideas of devotion and loyalty which were, in fact, the soul and breath of chivalry. A warlike spirit had indeed been revived in Italy by the establishment of bands of national militia, and the Italian condottieri, or soldiers of fortune, wandered like the ancient knights all over Europe, though rather in search of plunder than in quest of adventure. Tilts and tournaments were not unfrequent, and Lorenzo de Medici and his brother, Julian, had in their youth distinguished themselves in similar feats of arms in the eyes of their countrymen.

But the general corruption of manners had long since undermined all noble feelings of honour, faith and loyalty; and hearts beat now cold and base under their corslets of steel. Those adventures which the ancient romancers related with imperturbable gravity would have

sounded no less tedious than strange to the ears of men whose faith was languid and sceptic, whose valour was wily and mercenary.

Hence Pulci wrote a heroi-comic poem. He gave us a parody of those chivalrous legends from which his subject was drawn. He attempted in Italy, though rather clumsily, that revolution which Cervantes accomplished one hundred years later in Spain. His choice of the vulgar tongue—as the language of Dante was then blasphemously called—already announced a gay subject, for, whoever had any serious object in view must necessarily have written in Latin.

The example of Pulci, however, soon engendered, or rather increased a taste for that style of poetry. The courts of Mantua and Ferrara were soon seized with emulous ambition. Francesco Bello, or il Cieco di Ferrara, sung his "Mambriano" at the court of the Gonzaga, probably at the same time that Boiardo read the cantos of his "Orlando Innamorato" before Hercules of Este.

Matteo Maria Boiardo, Count of Scandiano, a man of refined taste and high feelings, versified an old chronicle of Charlemagne, by a rather strange anachronism, attributed to Turpin, Archbishop of Paris and contemporary with the French emperor, but for the authen-

ticity of which we must rest satisfied with the authority of Pope Calixtus II., who, in 1122, published a bull to the effect of sanctioning its validity.

It seems quite evident that Boiardo set about his task in a sportive humour, and the greatest part of his poem is filled up with half-comic adventures; but the poet's heart warms with his subject, it sympathises with the feelings of his imaginary heroes, it suffers itself to be taken by surprise and carried off by his enthusiasm to the fairy land of his fictions.

Few poets ever displayed such a wonderful power of invention. Out of those sterile absurdities of the poor French archbishop, the Italian poet has drawn an inextricable web in which the reader's mind is lost in amazement. It seems as if even the minstrel's fancy was bewildered in that boundless labyrinth. After having gone through fifty long cantos, the poem was left unfinished, whether in consequence of the invasion of Charles VIII. and of the poet's death, which took place late in the same year, or because he began to despair of drawing that wide-spread plan to a close, it would now be difficult to decide.*

* Boiardo, Matteo Maria, Count of Scandiano, born 1434; died Dec. 1494. First edition of his poem: Scandiano, 1495. Sonetti e Canzoni. Reggio, 1499.

The achievement of Boiardo's work was left for the still wider fancy of Ariosto.

This poet issued from a noble house which had, towards the middle of the fourteenth century, been allied by marriage to the reigning family of Este. His father was governor of Reggio in 1474, when Ludovico was born. Ariosto came young and friendless to the court of Ferrara, accompanied by his widowed mother, and nine brothers and sisters, who, after his father's death, depended on him, as the eldest, for their subsistence.

Nearly all that is known of his life is to be gathered from his Satires, in which, with great ingenuousness and singleness of heart, he communicates with his friends on many topics of domestic affliction.

The life of Ariosto is not much of a romance, nor was there any thing in the outward man that betrayed the poet. To an upright, cheerful disposition he added a latent feeling of independence, a defensive pride, which was put to sore trials during his intercourse with the great, whose favour he was, on account of his needy family, compelled to solicit.

At first he attached himself to Cardinal Hippolito, by whom he was hard-worked and poorly paid. Ariosto followed the fortunes of his patron during the wars of the League of Cam-

bray, and fought with distinguished valour at that naval battle on the Po, where the blue eagle of Este prevailed over the winged lion of St. Mark. He was repeatedly sent as an ambassador to the court of Julius II., and on one occasion, when none else volunteered to brave the resentment of the incensed pontiff. Ariosto was received at the Vatican with frowns and menaces; according to his biographer he even ran the greatest risk of being thrown into the Tiber, by the order of Julius, whose very dying words breathed fire and vengeance against Alphonso of Este.

The services of Ariosto were unhandsomely rewarded. Cardinal Hippolito, in whose pay the poet had spent fourteen years of his life, whose name he had transmitted to immortality in his poem, never allowed him a moment of rest. To escort the vain prelate in all solemn occurrences, to attend his levees, and follow him in his journeys, lost in the crowd of his minions, was more than the novice in courtly arts could learn to endure: so that being at last invited to travel with him beyond the Alps, where the cardinal had been promoted to a distant archbishopric, Ariosto did not hesitate to purchase his beloved independence by the loss of his scanty emolument.

Deprived of the cardinal's support, and

harassed by poverty, the poet was reminded of a friendly intimacy that had existed between him and Giovanni de Medici long before his exaltation to the pontifical see. Every day tidings were brought to him of the magnificent style, of the profuse liberality of Leo X. at Rome. To Rome the poet resolved to remove; and having gained an easy access, he offered to throw himself on his knees before the pope; but Leo would not allow his old friend to stoop to kiss his pontifical foot. He rose from the chair of St. Peter, and kissed his forehead—a mark of favour for which the proudest monarch would have sued in vain.

Ariosto thought that brighter days had finally dawned. Full of the most sanguine expectations, but bespattered with rain and mud, he made his way back to his inn, where he waited in vain for the shower of bounties which the sunshine of papal favour had given him reason to look forward to. But whether the ill-starred poet was lost sight of in the crowd of flatterers by which the throne of Leo was besieged, or whether the hatred, which that pope had inherited from his predecessor, Julius, against Alphonso of Este, was indiscriminately extended to all his subjects and dependents, it would be no easy task to determine. All that is well known is, that that benign accolade is all that

Ariosto ever received at the hands of Leo; and that, profiting by the lessons of experience, he refused to undertake a new journey to Rome, when, later in life, his friends wished to appoint him ambassador of Alphonso to the court of Clement VII.

At last, Duke Alphonso himself—of whom, if we except his inhuman severity against his nearest relatives, it must be said, that he was a generous prince—proved a better friend and supporter to the bard who had so loftily heralded the glories of his house. But by that strange misapplication of talent, so common in that age, which destined the dreaming poet, or the absent-minded scholar, to the discharge of arduous political and diplomatic offices, Ariosto was appointed by his patron to the government of Garfagnana, a wild district in the Appennines, for which the Este had to endure the most serious struggles against the republic of Lucca, and which they had recently secured, all riotous and rebellious, in their grasp.

This troublesome and dangerous dignity, which one of Ariosto's biographers very aptly compares to Sancho Panza's government of the isle Barattaria, the poet filled for three years, during which, his mildness and amiability, his disinterestedness and impartiality got the better of the stubborn race he had been sent to

subdue. The fame of his genius had established his popularity even among those lawless bandits of the forest, in whose hands he had more than once the ill-luck to fall, but by whom he was not only allowed to pass unmolested, but even cordially received, and escorted with every mark of honour and regard.

At the expiration of the third year of his reign, he was allowed to enjoy the peace of his humble but comfortable retirement at Ferrara, where his time was chiefly employed in the direction of the theatre, opened by the munificence of Alphonso, and on which he gave his four comedies in verse.

He died in 1533, about a twelvemonth after the ceremony of his coronation by the hand of the emperor Charles V. had, according to a somewhat vague tradition, taken place in Mantua.*

Ariosto grew up among the general admiration of all Italy, but especially of the court of Ferrara, for the work of Boiardo. And yet, notwithstanding this unanimous suffrage, the Orlando Innamorato was neither a correct nor a finished work. The style was thought to be harsh and uncouth; the language full of Lombard

* "L' Orlando Furioso," 1516—1532. "Satire," "Commedie," etc. Complete edition of Ariosto's works, Venice, 1772.

provincialisms. Soon after the author's death obscure poets had either continued or re-written nearly every stanza of the poem; but Berni, a Florentine of unequalled wit, and rare fertility of poetical vein, the inventor of a new style of buffoon poetry, that received its name from him, undertook the remoulding of the whole poem.*

The work of Berni was, however, only published in 1541, when the poem of Ariosto had mainly contributed to recall the public attention to the original source from which it was avowedly derived.

No poem ever opened with a wider and loftier commencement than that of Boiardo.

The production of an immense host of kings and queens, sultans and sultanesses, warriors and warrioresses, and the descriptions of their horses, armour, and pageantry, did not offer a sufficient scope for the poet's fancy. Not satisfied with the wide regions of the gloomy North, and of the golden East, nor with the ample resources of the kingdom of nature, he went beyond all mortal limits, and crowded the

* Francesco Berni, born towards 1500, lived at the court of Clement VII. and Alexander de Medici; charged by this last to poison Cardinal Hippolito, his cousin or brother, he refused. Died, poisoned by the duke himself, 1536. His works, besides the "Orlando," "Rime," Capitoli," etc.

air, the waters, and woods, with most heterogeneous spirits, benevolent, malevolent, from the abyss, from the sea, from the grave; all the visible and invisible became the domain of chivalrous poetry.

The hyppogriffs, winged horses, were seen soaring with their knights above the region of the storms; whales swam across the main, nourishing in their bosom churches, steeples, and inhabited convents. Castles arose in one night, with walls of steel and roofs of adamant, with enchanted gardens and labyrinths, speaking statues, spell-bound horses, and souls prophesying from their mouldering graves; with fountains of love, of hatred, of oblivion, springing from the neighbouring forest; with ruthless giants, tamed lions, men turned into birds or brutes—all moving as if in a vast magic circle around. Life was multiplied by a thousand supernatural contrivances, and communicated to the most unyielding or uncorporeal substances.

If there could be any thing more difficult for a human mind than to lay down the plan for so vast a conception, it must have been to take up its various threads, where they had been broken up by the mighty weaver, and lead them to an easy and gradual conclusion.

This was the work of Ariosto.

The poem of Boiardo was left interrupted at the moment in which, at the landing of the Saracen monarchs of Africa and Asia, and the irruption of the Moors of Spain, the great struggle between the cross and the crescent, the great anti-crusade, commenced; that of Ariosto ended with the final dispersion of the followers of the prophet.

But this main story was only a diminutive part of that immense romance. The ladies and knights, the arms and loves, the courtesies and daring achievements, which form its theme, give origin to a thousand new episodes, eternally diverging, converging, but always strictly, inseparably belonging to the subject. The heroes, led astray with so much apparent freedom and wantonness, roaming by land and sea, to heaven, hell, and purgatory—bewildered, enamoured, vow-bound, spell-bound, wounded, or prisoners, are always sure to reappear, dead or alive, at the best opportunity. All those natural or supernatural agents are moved without the slightest appearance of effort, like men on a chess-board by the hand of a skilful player—like spirits subservient to the wand of an enchanter.

In the midst of that vast confusion, it is not difficult to feel the influence of that art, admirably enhanced by a careful concealment of art,

that sovereign mind presiding over the whole, that unity which has power to subject immensity to its laws, that sovereign mind always serene, always at ease, while it grants us no rest; and we delight in the contemplation of its vastness, we like to run after its boldest flight, to abandon ourselves to its playful humour, in the same manner as one of the knights of those fables, in his hour of perplexity, lets the reins loose on the neck of his charger, to be led by the instinct of the sagacious animal.

So much for the work of imagination. But when, after making a sport of himself and his readers, the poet ventures on a sudden appeal to our sympathies; when he paints man abandoned to himself, grappling with superhuman difficulties, with no tutelar genius but his steady will, no enchanted shield but his undaunted virtue—the world of fiction suddenly disappears from our eyes, and there we stand, as if suddenly converted to the belief of those fables which had been woven in a spirit of jest and raillery.

Be it remarked, that a reaction in favour of chivalry had taken place in Lombardy at least, if not in Florence, in the times of Ariosto. The restoration of monarchical and feudal orders at Milan, Mantua, and Ferrara, the frequent intercourse with French and Spaniards,

the most chivalrous nations of Europe; the example of the brilliant court of Francis I., *le roi chevalier*, who revived the manners of ancient paladins; the rare exploits, and the noble character of the *preux* Bayard, from whose hands the French king was proud of receiving the order of knighthood, after the battle of Marignano—a state of continual warfare, especially in the south of Italy, where it assumed altogether a chivalrous aspect; the frequent recurrence of private engagements, such as the duel between Bayard and Sotomayor; the combat between ten French and ten Spanish knights, at Trani, and the other between thirteen French and thirteen Italian men-at-arms at Barletta—all these contemporaneous events contributed to re-awaken a warlike ardour, a spirit of chivalrous extravagance, which wonderfully increased during the whole of the sixteenth century, miserably contrasting with the general corruption and degeneracy of an enslaved race.

Boiardo and Ariosto both belonged by birth to noble, and, to a certain extent, feudal families. Both had borne arms in signal encounters; and the court of a prince for so many years engaged in the most disastrous campaigns, must, by necessity, have been wrought up to a feverish mood of warlike excitement.

There are epochs in history in which men's minds run into opposite extremes with gigantic strides. During the interval between Lorenzo de Medici and Alphonso of Ferrara, the whole country had undergone as rapid and as complete a revolution as it did afterwards, during nearly an equal number of years, in the age of Napoleon.

Hence Boiardo's work was not like that of Pulci, altogether meant for a burlesque work, till it appeared under the disguise of Berni's parody; and although the livelier fancy of Ariosto often led him into fits of jocose extravagance, still there are frequent passages in which he is evidently in earnest.

Such are, for instance, the outbursts of noble disdain with which his favourite hero, Ruggiero, throws away his enchanted shield, and Orlando the arquebuss of King Cimosco, scorning the idea of owing their victory to unnatural advantages. Such is the invective of the poet against that German contrivance which so powerfully contributed to eclipse the splendour of chivalry by neutralizing the main advantages of personal strength and prowess—the invention of gunpowder. Such his appeals to all the powers of Europe to put an end to their fraternal dissensions, and join in a common league against the threatening power of the Infidels.

Such, in short, are the characters of Ruggiero, Brandimarte, Zerbino, and other Christian knights, all alive to the noblest feelings, and not less admirable for loyalty, honour, and courtesy, than for headlong impetuosity of valour. It was thus that chivalrous poetry was called back to its primitive grandeur, and prepared to assume the majestic dignity of the genius of Tasso.

Every one is well aware that Ariosto is a descriptive rather than a sentimental writer; rather the poet of imagination than the heart. But although the natural buoyancy of his mind did not suffer him to dwell on melancholy subjects, yet he breaks forth in a few short and fugitive, but highly pathetic episodes, the more impressive, perhaps, and irresistible as they are unexpected. It seems as if, almost unawares, his fingers had fallen on the softest strings of his harp, and the tear lingered faint and reluctant on his unconscious eyes.

But Ariosto's peculiar charm lies in the grace, ease, and elegance of his—by turns grave or pathetic, sublime or sportive, and sometimes even designedly neglected, but—always fresh, fertile, inimitable style. In imitation of the minstrels from which his subject is taken, he displays that rare spontaneousness which was in him the result of long, arduous labour and

care, but which has all the appearance of extemporaneous effusion. He will at times repeat the last words of one stanza as the beginning of the next, like the narrator of a tale who, by such repetitions, seems to stop to take breath and collect his ideas.

Ariosto is the poet of youth, as Dante is the friend and companion of mature age. So far as the office of poetry can be merely to afford an easy and—with the exception of a few cantos—innocent delight; so far as it can have no other aim than to give rise to a rapid succession of infinitely varied and always pleasing emotions, without pointing to any determined object, without proving or illustrating any important truth,—Ariosto fulfilled a poet's mission.

As such, indeed, he has no parallel in any age or country—none, except perhaps that modern enchanter who dared to revive chivalry in this our sober, positive age; and even he, whose genius seemed above all titles, was proud of the appellation of "the Ariosto of the North."

CHAPTER III.

TASSO.

Alamanni — Bernardo Tasso — Torquato — His misfortunes — Catherine de Medici—Religious persecution in Italy—The house of Gonzaga—of Urbino—Of Savoy—Tasso's imprisonment—Jerusalem delivered—Revival of the spirit of the crusades—Italian drama—Aminta and Pastor Fido.

A NEW and extensive road to fame had no sooner been opened by the successful experiments of Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto, than a swarm of minor poets launched into the chivalrous arena. The Chronicles of Turpin being exhausted, the turn next came for King Arthur, the Amadises, and a hundred more warriors of British and Spanish descent. Numberless volumes of those chivalrous poems encumber to this day the shelves of Italian libraries, whence even the curiosity of our inquisitive age is seldom tempted to remove them.

There let them remain, not excepting even

the "Giron Cortese" and "Avarchide" of Luigi Alamanni, notwithstanding the blind partiality with which the first of these romances was set up for some time as the rival of the "Furioso," and notwithstanding the regard which we owe to the author's name.

Alamanni, whose fame is now rather attached to his didactic poem, "La Coltivazione," a cold but once much admired imitation of Virgil's Georgics,—was one of the warmest propugners of Florentine liberty, and found himself involved in its last downfal. He repaired to the court of France, where he lived and died, honoured with the esteem and friendship of the chivalrous king.*

No more notice shall be taken of the "Amadigi di Gaula," a Spanish romance, versified again and again by Bernardo Tasso, and brought to the prodigious length of one hundred cantos, in four quarto volumes, with more perseverance than success.

To the memory of this bard also, and to his moral character, a tribute of encomium is due. Tasso, a native of Bergamo, issued from an illustrious family, the ruins of whose castle are

* Luigi Alamanni, born at Florence, 1495; emigrated to France, 1523; returned, 1527; new exile, 1530; ambassador of Francis I. to Charles V., 1544; died, 1551. "Giron Cortese," Paris, 1548. "Avarchide," 1567. "La Coltivazione."

still standing, and the remote posterity still living in that mountainous region,—started from his father's mansion, early in youth, in quest of adventures. These were many and various. He lived for a long while in a state of great poverty in Rome, attached to the triumphal chariot of Tullia d' Aragona, the famous Aspasia of Italy. Later in life he was received at the court of Sanseverino, prince of Salerno, and was blessed with a few years of tranquillity at Sorrento, where he married Porzia de Rossi, a noble and accomplished Neapolitan lady.

Meanwhile, the prince his patron, involved in those tumults and conspiracies by which the people and the nobility of Naples resisted the instalment of the Spanish Inquisition, was driven into exile, where Bernardo followed him, with a faith and loyalty worthy of Amadis himself. *

It was during the short reprieve that Bernardo had from the persecution of fortune, that his son was born at Sorrento.

Torquato is to Italy the dearest of poets.—Dante was undoubtedly gifted with a more pro-

* Bernardo Tasso, born, 1493; established at Salerno, 1531; married, 1539; Torquato born, March 11, 1544; Bernardo left Naples, 1547; death of his wife, 1556; Bernardo invited to the court of Urbino, 1557; of Mantua, 1563; died, 1569. "L' Amadigi," first edition, Venice, 1560.

found genius, Ariosto endowed with a wider fancy, but the Italians are partial to Tasso on account of his sufferings: they love him because he was sovereignly unfortunate; and they feel as if the injustice by which his heart was broken, could be partly atoned for by an universal sympathy in his long career of wretchedness.

Before and after Torquato the world had witnessed more piercing griefs, more startling disasters,—sorrows in which a superior mind seems to delight and pride itself, demanding rather our reverence than our commiseration,—evils by which Providence makes a trial of our powers of endurance, to temper and refine the substance of our soul, and fit it for its high destination. Dante and Tasso had equally to struggle against the storms of life; but the proud soul of the former bore him up against fate, and he seemed to rise greater and nobler at every new blast of adversity; whilst the sensitive mind of the latter sank under the infliction of torture, and was cast ashore miserably shattered and wrecked.

Had fortune been less busy in heaping calamities on his head; had human malignity relented from long persecution, Torquato would have been equally industrious in working at his own misery:—melancholy was the fatal allotment of that great soul: it stole over his heart

at its first opening; it sat upon him like an incubus—a dead weight—blasting, consuming.

This fatal predisposition developed itself in his juvenile tastes,—in the morbid sensibilities of his passionate temper. It was a slow disease silently preying within,—a mourning cloud hanging on his pale brow, obscuring the immortal lamp of genius lighted in his eyes, casting its death-like shade on all objects around.

The eyes of Brutus were never moistened by tears: no smile, it is said, ever played on the lips of Torquato. His morn of life arose in gloom: from his earliest boyhood he was the son of an exile; he was torn from his mother's arms, who died of a broken heart not long afterwards; his nearest relatives turned out his envenomed adversaries; wandering and poverty became the lot of the young poet, and from that state he was in an evil hour relieved by the favour of the great, only to be plunged into greater distress.

Tasso was invited to the court of Ferrara in 1565.

There reigned then at Ferrara, since 1559, Alphonso II., son of Hercules II., and grandson of the first Alphonso, the patron of Ariosto. This young prince, vain and arrogant, no less than mean and selfish, who lavished the treasures laid up by the providence of his prede-

cessors, in vain struggles for the pre-eminence against the Duke of Tuscany, Cosmo I., and in no less idle schemes for his succession to the throne of Poland, prided himself, after the example of his ancestors, in eclipsing all the princes of Italy in the splendour of his courtly entertainments, and in the ample bounties he bestowed on talent of every kind.

He was then engaged in his extravagant preparations for the celebration of his marriage with the daughter of Ferdinand, king of the Romans: the house of Este had now reached its greatest lustre, and the pomp of its court outshone the splendour of the most powerful monarchs of Europe.

Tasso was first attached to the numerous retinue of the Cardinal of Este, Ludovico, the duke's brother, but he was soon brought into contact with all the members of the family, and with its stately and accomplished ladies, the sisters of Alphonso, Lucretia, duchess of Urbino, and the fatal Leonora.

Whether the juvenile admiration and devotion of Torquato for this proud beauty ever assumed the character of a more tender and dangerous passion;—by what stages the intimacy between two beings so differently situated, became the main instrument that clouded the serenity of that doomed mind;—how far the

sympathizing princess shared the flame that her charms or her virtues had kindled in her bard's breast, or in the incautious gratification of feminine coquetry, she fostered the daring hopes of her ardent worshipper—are questions of the most difficult solution.

Every one of Tasso's biographers agrees in this alone: that his attachment to Leonora of Este was the remotest cause of his long misfortunes—the rest is made up by vain conjectures, vague rumours, and even daring falsehoods, from which the real truth will never be thoroughly extricated.

Evil, however, did not prevail at once against him. On the contrary, he was allowed to enjoy an hour of unalloyed bliss, surrounded, as he found himself in the prime of his life, with the radiancy of courtly favour, and all the *prestige* of premature fame.

Towards the close of the year 1570, Tasso was requested to accompany the Cardinal of Este to the court of France, whither that prelate was sent as a legate of his brother.

Italians were then sure of a hearty reception at Paris.

The name of another cardinal of Este, Hippolito, (a nephew of Hippolito I., the patron of Ariosto,) was highly revered and cherished in a country where he stood forward as a warm

lover and promoter of letters and arts. Charles IX. reigned then in France, and Catherine de Medici reigned over him, as well as over all her weak and effeminate, though, on the whole, kind and affable children. Under Catherine's patronage, those among the Italians who had followed the standards of France during that long period of wars, the numerous exiles from the never-ending commotions of the Italian states, and all, in fact, whose valour, or learning, or any other accomplishment, recommended them to royal favour, never failed to meet with a cordial reception at the court of the successors of Francis I.

The descendants and relatives of the noble Trivulzio, the heirs of the name of that last of the Florentines, Filippo Strozzi, were still distinguished by daring feats of arms at the head of the French armies and fleets, while the pursuits of learning at the university and the edifices of the metropolis began to feel the impulse, and to bear the marks of Italian genius.

The times, however, were, at that epoch, big with ominous events. Murder and treason presided over the councils of Catherine.

Placed between the opposite factions of two proud rebellious houses, the Guises and Bourbons, to whom the popular bigotry of religious opinions afforded an easy pretext for conspiring

against the throne, the French court was then probably maturing its atrocious plan for the summary execution of St. Bartholomew's eve.

That tragedy took place less than a twelvemonth after Torquato's visit to Paris, Aug. 24, 1572. But if all the traditions attached to that deed of bloodshed be true—for more recent writers have laboured to remove the odium of that long-premeditated crime from the heads against which the unanimous execration of that age had laid it—the bard must have been surprised by the smiles with which the haughty Medici encouraged the Protestant lords, then all-powerful at court, while her inmost heart was beating with joy at the thriving prospect of her murderous schemes—and the hand which King Charles held out to the hoary Coligni was ready to grasp the arquebuss against the hunted-down Huguenots, who repaired for a shelter to the walls of the Louvre, and loudly claimed the fulfilment of his royal promises.

Tasso,—whose education under the Jesuits at Rome, and enthusiastic disposition, had early inspired with rigid and gloomy religious feelings, very nearly bordering on bigotry and fanaticism; whom all the re-assurances of his friends, and his frequent consultations with the grand Inquisitor at Ferrara, could scarcely reconcile to his boding conscience; and who

was kept in a constant alarm lest he should give way to the heretic doubts that assailed him;—now was shocked at the apparent familiarity with which the sectarians of Calvin were treated in a Catholic court. His zeal appeared extreme even to his patron, Cardinal Ludovico, who, probably, entered with more sagacity into the views of Catherine de Medici. The consequence was, that at the close of a rather warm controversy on that subject, Torquato, wounded by the high tone which the prelate assumed towards his dependent, quitted the Louvre after nearly a year's residence, and, travelling across the Alps, reappeared at Rome in January 1572.

Italy and Rome presented at that epoch a very different scene from that apparent calm and concord, then prevailing at the court of Paris.

The days of religious forbearance and fashionable scepticism were long since over, when the doctrines of Protestantism were not unfavourably listened to even by members of the sacred college; when Swiss and German reformers numbered among their proselytes some of the eminent men and the noblest ladies in Italy; when Calvin found a refuge at the court of Ferrara, where the Duchess Renée, daughter of Louis XII. of France and married to Hercules II. of

Este, had warmly embraced the new doctrines, and appointed its most zealous supporters to the education of her children.

Times were sadly changed.

The tribunal of the Inquisition, instituted at Rome by order of Paul III., under the influence of Cardinal Carafta, and other evenomed enemies of Lutheranism, had extended its havoc all over the country.*

That same Carafta, when raised to the pontificate in 1555, under the name of Paul IV., carried persecution to an extremity unexampled in the annals of his predecessors, the irascible but high-minded Paul III., and the voluptuary, Julius III. The Duchess of Ferrara was the first visited by his pontifical wrath. Deprived of all intercourse with her friends, separated from her children, overwhelmed with the bitter upbraidings of her ungenerous husband, and harassed by the admonitions of her relatives from France, she was, until her husband's death, little better than a prisoner in her palace.

If the authority of the pope met with no resistance on the part of the proudest princes in Italy, it will be easily perceived that the multitude could have no protection against it.

* The Inquisition re-established at Rome by Paul III., July 21, 1542.

In vain did the Republic of Venice firmly oppose the introduction of the Holy Office into its territories, braving the thunders of the Vatican. In vain did Milan and Naples again and again rise in open and successful rebellions against the agents of the Spanish Inquisition, backed as they were by the victorious armies of Charles V. and Philip II. Papal stratagem and dexterity succeeded where open violence had failed. The ministers of the Holy Office from Rome met with a more favourable reception than the Spanish Dominicans. Their proceedings were milder and more cautious, their executions were enveloped in mystery; but the very awe of those deeds of darkness had a more appalling effect on the multitude than the glare of the burning piles of Seville and Toledo.

The reign of Paul IV. was signalized by a long series of awful butcheries. The Republic of Venice, whilst refusing admission to the Roman inquisitors, had taken on itself the responsibility of extirpating heresy from its territories. It acted according to the measures of its tenebrous policy. Hundreds of victims were thrown into its dungeons, rowed out at dead of night, and sunk into the silent lagoon.

The Dukes of Ferrara and Tuscany, wishing to rid themselves of the odium inseparable from those executions, resigned their right of juris-

diction over such of their subjects as were suspected of heterodoxy, and oftentimes gave up their very best friends to the ecclesiastical courts, or sent them as a propitiatory offering to Rome; whilst the Holy Office of that city boasted, as a proof of rare humanity, that its victims were beheaded or strangled previous to being consigned to the flames.

A more atrocious work of desolation was in the meantime carried on in Calabria. Under pretence of political rebellion, a lawless soldiery was let loose against a poor inoffensive district, where a few colonists of Waldenses had been thriving unmolested for more than two centuries. Their brethren in the valleys of the Alps fared little better under the rule of the house of Savoy.

The Grisons, Valais, and other cantons of Switzerland, Germany, and England, swarmed with Italian exiles for religious opinions; among them men conspicuous for genius and learning, such as Paul Vergerio, Ochino, Peter Martyr, Celio Secundo Curio, and a multitude of labourers and artizans, with whom industry for ever transmigrated beyond the Alps.*

* Bernardino Ochino, born at Siena, 1487; a Capuchin, 1534; a favourite with Clement VII. and Paul III.; embraced the reformed opinions, 1540; repaired to Geneva and married,

A reaction took place at Rome at the death of Paul IV, in 1550, when the infuriated Roman populace threw open the dungeons of the Inquisition, burnt the house to the ground, and perpetrated the most violent outrages against the memory of the bloody pope and the members of his family.

His successor, Pius IV.,—Angelo de Medici, brother of the famous hero and adventurer, the Marquis of Marignano, one of the greatest generals of Charles V.,—seemed inclined to mild and conciliatory measures; but on the accession of Pius V., in 1566, the work of persecution

1542; went to England, 1547; obliged to leave England, repaired to Strasburg, 1553; minister of an Italian church at Zurich, 1555; banished from Zurich, travelled to Moravia and Poland, 1563; died in Moravia, 1564. His works printed, 1543.—Peter Paul Vergerio, a papal nuncio at the diet of Augsburg, 1530; sent again to Germany by Paul III.; his conferences with Luther, 1535; sent to the diet of Worms, 1541; won over to Protestantism; persecuted at Venice and Mantua; died at Tubingen, 1566.—Peter Martyr Vermigli, born at Florence, 1500; an Augustinian monk, 1526; emigrated to Zurich and Strasburg; married a German nun, 1544; appointed professor of divinity at Oxford, 1549; obliged to quit Oxford, retired to London, 1550; persecuted by the rabble in London; obliged to quit England, 1553; went over to Zurich and Geneva; died at Zurich, 1562.—The remains of his wife unburied, and burnt at Oxford, 1552.—Celio Secundo Curio, born at Turin, 1503; converted to Protestantism, 1523; arrested at Turin, and escaped from the prison of the Holy Office, 1532; a professor of belles lettres at Pavia; defended by his pupils against the agents of the Inquisition, 1540; emigrated to Lausanne 1547; died at Bale, 1567.

recommenced with unprecedented fury. Autos-da-fé were performed almost every day before the eyes of the terrified Romans; and when Torquato was admited to kiss the foot of the truculent pontiff, the ashes of the heroic Carnesecchi, and of the righteous Aonio Paleario, were almost still smoking on their pyres.*

Notwithstanding all his zeal for the cause of religion, Tasso could not behold such atrocious scenes without horror. From Rome, therefore, he soon repaired to Ferrara, where the good offices of the duke's sisters had bent his mind to grant the poet a friendly reception.

Restored to courtly favour, during this short interval of prosperity, Tasso actively pursued those of his works that have mostly contributed to commend his name to posterity, but which likewise drew down upon him the shafts of courtly envy and calumny: the "Aminta," and the "Jerusalem Delivered."

From the epoch of the first acting of his

* Pietro Carnesecchi of Florence; apostolical prothonotary under Clement VII.; converted to Protestantism by Juan Valdez in Naples, 1534; cited before the Inquisition at Rome, 1546; emigrated to Paris, 1552; cited once more to Rome, and excommunicated, 1559: dissuaded by Cosmo I. of Tuscany from emigrating to Geneva; given up by Cosmo to the inquisitors; sent to Rome, 1565; burnt, 1567.—Aonio Paleario of Veroli; professor at Siena, 1534; at Lucca, 1543; at Milan, 1550; burnt, 1570. His works published, Jena, 1728.

pastoral drama in 1572, and the circulation of a few cantos of his epic poem, the attacks of criticism—to which he unfortunately attached more importance, and which affected him more painfully than is the case with most men of really superior intellect—allowed him scarcely an instant of rest. Torquato saw, or perhaps only fancied he saw, in the duke some disposition to listen to and encourage his adversaries. That these were many and various, when we consider the poet's popularity at home and abroad, no less than the vehemence, austerity, and haughtiness of his temper—may be easily believed; and we can also readily perceive that Alphonso, already predisposed against Tasso, by what he considered his disrespectful conduct towards the cardinal his brother, and by some vague suspicion of the rash, ambitious passion that glowed ill-concealed in the poet's bosom, had altered his manners towards him, and made him aware of the little chance he had of withstanding the wily arts of flattery and duplicity that were brought to bear against him.

This he felt, and, assailed by a hundred doubts and apprehensions, enfeebled by bodily sufferings, and haunted by religious scruples—perhaps also in the hope that absence would have a healing effect on his love-sick heart, he was determined on quitting Ferrara.

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His intent transpired, and the jealous duke had recourse to every means, fair or foul, to prevent his escape. Torquato's proud and independent soul perceived with indignation that all his movements were closely watched, and found himself the centre of a wide-spread system of espionage, by which he felt as a prisoner at his patron's court.

Tasso's resentment was equal to the insult. It led to that long series of rash and violent outbursts of passion; to those sudden escapes from Ferrara, and long wanderings throughout Italy—to his pious sister's lonely house at Sorrento, to Venice, to Mantua and Urbino, whence he always fled as if urged on by his evil demon in quest of new terrors and sufferings.

And yet he had, both at Urbino and Mantua, warm and powerful friends.

The Gonzaga, then a numerous and illustrious family, had been lately indemnified for the long adversities they had to endure during the usurpations of Visconti and Sforza, and the successive invasions of French, Swiss, and Germans in Lombardy.

The Gonzaga, from their first exaltation in the fourteenth century, were highly distinguished as warriors, and offered their services to the leading powers of Italy, particularly to the Republic of Venice, their natural ally,

against the lords of Milan. One of them, Giŏvan Francesco, then marquis of Mantua, commanded the forces of the Italian allies at Fornovo, in 1495, when, owing to want of discipline, he was frustrated in his attempt to arrest Charles VIII. of France, in his hasty retreat from his conquest of Naples.

His successors, after long wavering, had espoused the cause of the Emperor Charles V., who erected the marquisate of Milan into a duchy, and, after the extinction of the heroic house of Montferrat, invested the Gonzaga with the sovereignty of that state, in open violation of the rights of the house of Savoy. The reigning duke was now Guglielmo, (1570—1587,) a weak and voluptuous, though a generous prince; but broken down by age and infirmity, he suffered himself to be ruled by his eldest son, Vincenzo Gonzaga, an unprincipled libertine.

This young prince—whose extravagances in domestic life, whose divorce and second marriage, had already scandalized the whole country,—who had stabbed his tutor, the admirable Crichton, from Scotland, in a drunken brawl, in the streets of Mantua,—had, perhaps, no other merit than that of having, in all circumstances, constantly befriended Torquato.

Another branch of the Gonzaga family then

reigned at Guastalla; one of whom, Scipio Gonzaga, afterwards a cardinal, had lived with Tasso at the university of Padua, in terms of fraternal familiarity. He had instituted in that town the academy of the Eterei, of which Torquato was a member, and continued his friend and correspondent to the end of his life.

The throne of Urbino was then occupied by Francesco Maria II. della Rovere, who had, in 1570, married Lucretia of Este. This princess seemed indeed to prefer the residence of her brother's court at Ferrara, to the company of her husband, who loved her not. But in her absence, as well as during her residence, Tasso was always sure of a warm reception at Urbino.

The family, Della Rovere, owed its earliest origin to the favour of Pope Sixtus IV., who was the son of a fisherman from Savona; and who raised his nephew, John della Rovere, to the sovereignty of Sinigaglia and Camerino; and Giuliano, (afterwards Pope Julius II.,) to the cardinalate. Sixtus, however, showed more tenderness towards his sister's sons, Pietro and Girolamo Riario, whom he raised to the most important dignities of the church.

Both families were, after his death, brought to the brink of ruin, either in consequence of domestic tragedies, or through the perfidy of Alexander VI. and Cæsar Borgia.

John della Rovere, however, had, in a good time, allied himself to the heroic house of Montefeltro, who, for more than two centuries, had ruled with unrivalled splendour at Urbino. He had married the daughter and heiress of Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, the last of that name, and acquired just claims to his throne. John died before Julian was raised to the chair of St. Peter, in 1503. But Julius II. did not fail to support the rights of his brother's son, Francis Maria, to whom he intrusted the command of his papal forces, during his unsuccessful exertions to drive the barbarians from Italy.

On the death of Julius, Francis Maria was dispossessed of his states by Leo X., who disposed of them in favour of his nephew, Lorenzo de-Medici. But the dethroned prince had previously connected himself by marriage with the house of Gonzaga, and found his refuge at Mantua, whither he carried his library, and the treasures of art, collected with royal magnificence by his predecessors.

The exile of Della Rovere lasted during all the reign of Leo. This pope being dead, Francis Maria headed his partizans, and reconquered his states in four days. His court was restored to its primitive splendour during the rest of his reign, under his son, Guido-

baldo, and his grandson, Francis Maria II., who ascended the throne in 1574.

It was at Urbino, in 1572, that the "Aminta" was first performed. Yet from Urbino and Mantua the restless poet stole repeatedly away, resisting the most urgent entreaties; and it was in consequence of these furtive departures, that he found himself oftentimes in a state of destitution, and was again compelled to apply to those same friends for relief.

In such a state of squalor and misery he appeared in 1579 at the gates of Turin, where he was, as a vagrant, refused admittance. Being, however, recognized by some of his friends, he was introduced to the reigning duke, Emmanuel Philibert, a highly renowned warrior, who honoured in Torquato no less his poetical talents than his noble birth and well-known personal valour.

The house of Savoy is, perhaps, the most ancient reigning family in Europe; but their certain traditions go no further back than the beginning of the eleventh century, when their ancestors, probably of Saxon derivation, established their sway over a barren district of the Alps, under the title of counts of Savoy. They gradually extended their dominion on the better side of the Alps, usurped the sovereignty of the vale of Aosta, of Ivrea, and

Turin, and received the homage of the rival houses of Saluzzo and Montferrat, especially whilst the noble warriors of the latter family, Conrad and Baldwin, were engaged in their long career of conquest and glory in the Levant.

The house of Savoy reached a very high degree of power and wealth under Amedeus VIII., who, during his long reign from 1398 to 1451, had reunited under his sceptre the states that had hitherto been divided between two different branches of the family, and added important conquests to his double inheritance.

His successors were not equally fortunate: at the epoch of the first French invasion of Charles VIII. in 1494, Blanche of Montferrat, regent of Savoy, had aided the descent of the French monarch; but her son, Charles III., was soon overwhelmed by the attacks of the invaders, both friends and enemies; and, distracted by the rebellion of the Genevese protestants, he was, at his death in 1533, stripped of all his dominions.

Emmanuel Philibert, his son and heir, a lackland adventurer, entered into the service of the Emperor Charles V., the principal author of his father's ruin, and who had but lately adjudged the succession of Montferrat to the

rival house of Mantua.—The young prince had, by dint of strenuous exertions, inured a sickly frame to the most arduous achievements. He soon became one of the emperor's best generals: he followed him to his African expeditions, and was the greatest instrument of his power during the long struggles of Flanders.

After the abdication of Charles V. in 1556, Philibert, whose states were always a prey to the French and Imperial armies, was equally the greatest of Philip II.'s generals, and won for him the decisive battle of St. Quentin, in 1557, which led to the treaty of Chateau-Cambresis.

During these famous negociations, his services were finally taken into consideration, and he was in consequence restored to the throne of his ancestors in 1559.

Since that epoch Emmanuel Philibert zealously laboured to promote the welfare of his subjects, who had been plundered and ravaged by so long a series of political calamities. Science and letters received the warmest encouragement at Turin, where the duke had established the seat of government; and Piedmont, under his administration, assumed that aspect of splendour, culture and prosperity, which, in the sixteenth century, characterised the Italian states.

At the court of so noble a prince, Tasso could be no unwelcome guest. But his evil genius once more dragged the wanderer to Ferrara. A young prince of the house of Alphonso, called the Marquis of Este, resided at Turin; he offered his mediation to reconcile the fugitive bard to his hard-hearted patron. At the epoch of Alphonso's third marriage with a princess of Mantua, Vincenzo Gonzaga equally interposed his good offices, and Tasso was once more at the feet of Alphonso.

The duke's cold reception, and the sneers of his minions, reawakened the poet's fury; he was heard uttering bitter invectives against his master's ingratitude: a few rash, incoherent words, the outburst of a momentary excitement, were construed into a deliberate insult; and his enemy seized on the first pretext afforded by his own impetuosity to silence his complaints for ever.

This accounts for Tasso's seven years' confinement in the hospital of St. Anna, better, perhaps, than the kiss that the poet, in a fit of madness, was said to have given his princess in the presence of the duke and his court—an anecdote contradicted, however, by all authors who wrote not under the immediate influence of the house of Este; and this equally accounts for the

obstinacy with which Alphonso resisted the entreaties of all the princes of Italy, of the popes, Gregory XIII. and Sixtus V., of the Emperor Maximilian, and even of the community of Bergamo, all suing for the release of his victim.

Tasso's confinement commenced in March 1579, and ended in 1586, when, by the intercession of Vincenzo Gonzaga, his relentless gaoler was finally induced to throw open the door of his cell; even then, Alphonso, as if dreading the presence of the man he had so cruelly offended, refused to see him, and to receive his acknowledgment of thanks.

The horrors of Tasso's confinement are beyond all power of description. But after some years of frenzy and despair, the Duchess of Urbino,—his other more dangerous friend, Leonora, had died in 1581,—was allowed to alleviate his miseries, and more latitude was granted to the broken-hearted recluse. But Torquato's mind had already given way; and when Gonzaga led the rescued to Mantua, the poet, in his forty-second year, "overcome by years and misfortune," was dead even to the enjoyment of freedom. The splendour of the court of Mantua ill-suited the shattered mind of Torquato. It dazzled him as the glare of broad daylight proves offensive to eyes long accustomed to the gloom of a dungeon.

And he became a wanderer; and all the rest of his life was a weary pilgrimage, scarcely ever cheered by a ray of pleasing remembrance or hope.

His favourite residence was the house of Manso, marquis of Villa, in Naples, the same house which was not long afterwards opened with equal hospitality to John Milton of England.

He yielded to the invitation of Pope Clement VIII., who wished to "honour the poetical laurel by placing it on his brow;" and removed to Rome on the tenth of November, 1594. The pope's nephews, the Cardinals Cinthio and Pietro Aldobrandini, distinguished for their literary accomplishments, and for many years previous interested in Tasso's welfare, were actively employed in the preparation of that solemn ceremony.

But death already claimed Torquato as his own.

Struck by mortal disease nearly on the eve of the day appointed for his coronation, he withdrew to the convent of St. Onophrio, and expired April 25, 1595.

Retribution, however, was soon at hand. Tasso's vain and heartless persecutor found his bitterest enemies among the best friends of the poet. He died without issue only two

years after Tasso, and carried into his tomb the execration of Italy. Don Cæsar of Este, in whom the hopes of the dying tyrant for the perpetuation of his house were centered, found himself, on his accession, at war with the pope, and the Aldobrandini, who, on the ground of his illegitimacy, vindicated the rights of the Holy See to the fief of Ferrara. Lucretia, duchess of Urbino, conspired with its enemies for the destruction of her family. Driven from Ferrara more by the excommunications than by the armies of Rome, Don Cæsar withdrew to Modena, where the lustre of the house of Este was soon extinguished.

The writings of Tasso,* in prose and verse, are all equally distinguished for that profundity, dignity, and loftiness of feeling,—by that dye of melancholy,—by that spirit of chivalrous enthusiasm, which constituted the main feature of his character. Still, the most immediate emanation from the author's soul was the beloved work of his serene days, the "Jerusalem Delivered."

* Tasso's works: "Il Rinaldo"—"La Gerusalemme Liberata"—"L' Aminta"—"Sonetti e Canzoni"—"Dialoghi"—"Il Torrismondo"—"Lettere"—"La Gerusalemme Conquistata"—"Il Mondo Creato," etc., etc.—First edition of "Il Rinaldo," Venice, 1562; of the "Jerusalem Delivered," 1581. Best edition, Mantua, 1584; the "Aminta," 1572; last edition of "Jerusalem Conquered," 1642; complete edition of his works, Florence, 1724.

Born only ten years after the death of Ariosto, Torquato said of himself, that the fame of his predecessor allowed him no rest.

Having shown by his juvenile essay—"Il Rinaldo," that there was scarcely any height to which he might not fairly consider himself entitled to aspire, stimulated as he was by his unhappy passion, which imperiously required of him to raise himself to the level of the object of his affections, Tasso entered the lists as Ariosto's rival.

But Torquato was no man to follow in the footsteps of another. He read the "Furioso," and joined in the universal applause of his age, but he said, like Correggio after gazing eagerly on a painting of Raphael—"I too am a painter." He said, like Michael Angelo when, called to the direction of the works of the Vatican, he stopped on the last hill from which he could cast a glimpse of the dome of Brunelleschi—"Better than you I cannot build; but like you I will not."

Tasso was easily made aware that the chivalrous dreams of French and Spanish chronicles were by that time utterly exhausted. He looked for a more stirring subject on the latest and greatest event of chivalrous times—an event equally belonging to chivalry, by the moral agents that determined its course, by

the wonders of valour to which it gave birth; belonging to history, by the monuments engraved on the traditions of ages, by the political effects it had on the destinies of Europe—the Crusades.

Recent events had given a fresh interest to the records of the wars of Palestine. Since the last ineffectual attempt of Pius II., in 1453, no Christian prince had endeavoured to preach a holy war. But the Mussulmans, against whom the European powers, intent on their brotherly feuds, no longer thought of waging war in the east, now in their turn had begun to threaten the west. Masters of Constantinople for nearly a century, the successors of Mahomet II. rapidly proceeded in their career of conquest.

Soliman the Magnificent, having subdued Egypt and Persia, turned his arms at once against the whole of Christendom. Hungary and the mainland of Greece already acknowledged his sway; and his lieutenants were emboldened to lay siege to the Austrian metropolis. His naval armaments in the meanwhile prevailed over the heroism of the Knights of Rhodes, and drove them from that last bulwark of Christendom. Several years later, his fleets pursued the Knights of St. John to their new stronghold of Malta; whilst Genoa had been

stripped of the sovereignty of Scio, and Venice lavished in vain her best blood during two long and disastrous wars, at the end of which she was deprived of the Morea and Cyprus. Meanwhile, the pirates of Algiers and Tetuan, organized in a religious and military body, as if in emulation of the order of Malta, not unfrequently countenanced by the Christian powers themselves, especially by Francis I. of France, sailed over the Mediterranean with triumphant colours.*

A cry of horror and consternation arose from all the churches of Christendom.

The popes and clergy appealed to what still remained of gallantry and generosity in warlike Europe. The helpless multitude uttered bitter curses against princes who wasted their forces in deeds of fraternal bloodshed, leaving them exposed to the fury of relentless barbarians.

Hence, as is but too natural to men in adversity, they turned with fond remembrance to the days of ancient glory, when the iron-clad warriors of the cross, headed by the standard of

* Soliman ascended the throne, 1520; his wars with Hungary, 1522, 1526; siege of Vienna, 1529; new Hungarian wars, 1532, 1534, 1547; taking of Rhodes, 1523; siege of Malta, 1565; the Venetians driven from the islands of the Archipelago and the Morea, 1537, 1540; the Venetians driven from Cyprus, 1570, 1573; Charles V.'s successful attack on Tunis, 1535; routed at Algiers, 1541.

redemption, rode to their military pilgrimage. The names of Godfrey of Bouillon, of Tancred of Apulia, of Conrad of Montferrat, of Henry Dandolo, were raised to the stars; those names, they said, the very sound of which could have power to start a Saracine mother in her sleep, to clasp her infant to her bosom in anguish and terror. They looked with sorrow and pride to the trophies of standards still suspended to the walls of their cathedrals, where they had been consecrated to the God of Hosts by the victorious pilgrims of pious, chivalrous ages.

The spirit of the crusades was revived.

The rapid progress of Soliman finally determined Austria, Spain and Italy, to draw the sword once more for their common defence. The Protestant powers of Germany, setting aside their sectarian quarrels, hastened to the rescue of Vienna. The armaments against Tunis and Algiers, carried on with various success by Charles V. in person, during the short intervals of truce that were left to him from the European wars, were, in fact, crusades. The fleets of Venice and Genoa, the galleys of the Duke of Tuscany, the inheritor of the maritime power of Florence and Pisa, engaged in unequal but constant conflicts against their common enemy.

A universal armament of all Christians, at

least of all Catholic powers, was long spoken of in Italy; and the vain and weak patron of Tasso had even been flattered with a hope of obtaining its supreme command. Finally in 1571, when Tasso had first conceived the plan of his Jerusalem, the fleets of Spain, Sicily, and the Netherlands, led by the lieutenant of Philip II., Don Juan of Austria, an illegitimate son of Charles V., and accompanied by the Genoese and Venetian admirals, Giovanni Andrea Doria, and Barberigo, as well as by the papal admiral, Marco Antonio Colonna, and the flotillas of Savoy and Tuscany, came to a decisive combat against the combined fleets of the Mahometan powers, on the waters of Lepanto, where the Mussulmans lost one hundred and fifty vessels, and forty thousand combatants.

The tidings of this great victory spread the most sanguine hopes throughout Christendom.

The most zealous Christians pointed to Constantinople and Jerusalem. Pope Pius V. who had been the first promoter of that great enterprise, set no limits to his daring expectations. The crusade was once more to be preached all over Europe. Then did Tasso sing the crusade—then did he raise the war-cry of Clermont, "It is the will of God."

It is given only to men of the highest genius thus to revive the spirit of their age. It

is by such ways that a poet makes himself the soul of his nation, and his verses sound like the hymns of a prophet.

Together with the knights and paladins of Ariosto, Tasso abandoned likewise the sportive style with which their deeds had hitherto been celebrated, and which ill suited the gravity of his pious subject, and the stern, melancholy disposition of his nature; for the desultory fancies of chivalrous poetry, he substituted the symmetrical forms of epic narrative.

The classical turn that studies had taken since the revival of ancient literature, made our scholars regret that Italian poetry had departed from the rules laid out by Greek and Latin genius and criticism, which, directing all means to one end, combining unity with variety, had given a poem all the unison of one of those classical buildings,

"All musical in its immensities."

The Divine Comedy was for them only an allegorical or metaphysical, the "Furioso" only a chivalro-romantic; but a truly epic poem was still the object of every one's wishes, the goal to which more than one of Torquato's predecessors had fruitlessly aspired.

The "Amadigi" of Bernardo his father, was formerly dictated in accordance with the rules of classicism; and it was only by the advice of

his friends, that its author was prevailed upon to remodel it after the manner of Ariosto. The "Avarchide" of Alamanni, was also a servile imitation of the Iliad. But a still greater expectation was raised by the "Italia Liberata," a poem in blank verse by Trissino, on the wars of Belisarius and Narses, which was still more faithfully copied from the models of antiquity, but proved still a greater failure.*

In the "Jerusalem Delivered," at last Italy had its epic poem;—a work, belonging to the ancients by its classical forms, pertaining to the moderns by its romantic subject, seemed to have secured all suffrages, and, according at least to the ideas of the age, to have reached the highest state of faultless excellence.

The "Jerusalem" of Tasso is too well-known a work, to require that I should dwell on its general plan, or on its multifarious beauties. Torquato is, by confession of all, the greatest of epic narrators.

He seemed seldom to aspire to the glory of original invention. The enchanted isle of Armida is only a fine reproduction of the gardens

* Gian Giorgio Trissino, born at Vicenza, 1478; ambassador of Leo X. to Denmark, Vienna, and Venice, 1516; legate of Clement VII. to Charles V. and to Venice, 1525; died at Venice, 1550. The "Italia Liberata dai Goti," printed Rome, 1547; the "Sophonisba" his tragedy, first acted, 1515; published, 1524.

of Alcina: Clorinda reminds us of the virgin Camilla; Argantes of Turnus. The ancient Italian poets seemed to lay their pride in entering into a competition with their classic masters. The nocturnal excursion of Ulysses and Diomedes to the Trojan encampment reappears under various shapes in the Æneid, in the Orlando, and the Jerusalem. But what novel interest that crude, primitive conception of the harper of Ionia seems to acquire at every new reproduction! By what nobler motives are Euryalus and Nisus, Cloridan and Medoro, Argantes and Clorinda, led to their daring exploits! What unexplored sources of pathos Virgil, Ariosto, and Tasso, added to what was originally only a wolfish, cold-blooded butchery —what fatal catastrophes have been successively attached to what was merely an unimportant episode!

It is thus that Tasso has, in more than one instance, come off conqueror in his contest with his predecessors. His lofty mind seemed to ennoble every thing he touched. His genius never declines. Ever worthy of himself, always consistent, always master of his subject, he surveys the progress of his work with an austere and placid serenity. His tender, sad, chivalrous character breathes through every line of the poem. His style is always equally grave

and sonorous; his verses have the perpetual flowing and rolling of the waves of an ocean at rest.

It is equally well known that his grandeur and gorgeousness of imagery and style not unfrequently degenerates into turgidness and mannerism, and his harmony and fluency have caused him to fall into languor and sameness. I shall have occasion to mention that this poet was not unjustly accused of having led the way to the extravagances of the school of Marini.

But the obstinate war he had to sustain on this account against his worthless enemies, especially the members of the newly installed academy Della Crusca—who came, as it were, to provoke the lion at the bars of his iron cage, during the sorrows of his septennial imprisonment—the long and fruitless labour to which he tasked his care-worn mind to satisfy their importune criticisms, by his remodelled poem "Jerusalem Conquered"—must absolve him in the eyes of a sympathizing posterity for a few and rare aberrations of taste, which, in that full glare of glorious beauties, only the lynx eyes of malignity could have easily detected.

The life of Tasso was like a long purgatory, from which his fame issued pure and immaculate, disarming the rigour of future criticism.

The Italian drama owed its origin to the

same sources to which we are indebted for the revival of chivalro-epic poetry—the policy and munificence of the Medici and Este.

From the earliest traditions of the middle ages it appears, that those formless religious spectacles, known by the name of *miracles, mysteries,* or *moralities,* were wont to be exhibited in Italy as well as in many other parts of Europe, on the public squares, before the ignorant multitude.

It is generally believed, for instance, that the first thought of his mysterious journey to the eternal regions was first suggested to Dante from one of those popular shows which took place on the banks of the Arno, at Florence, during the jubilee of 1300. In the like manner we read that Lorenzo de Medici himself wrote one of those mysteries for the entertainment of his Florentines. On the other hand it can be reasonably conjectured that the ancient extemporaneous performances of *mimi* and *histriones,* in which the Roman people delighted, had never been utterly discontinued. On the contrary, those coarse and licentious buffooneries, which the Italian critics have traced back to the Oscian farces of their earliest forefathers, survived even the revival of classical comedy, and were still flourishing under the name of "Commedie dell' Arte," when Goldoni finally succeeded in driving them from the stage.

There is little doubt that from these specimens of the popular theatre, rude and imperfect as they may appear, men of genius could have derived the elements of a true national drama, in the same manner as the ballads and romances of untutored minstrels gave origin to the polished works of Ariosto and Tasso.

Unfortunately, it was from different sources that the Italian theatre arose.

The play-houses, vast and magnificent buildings,—some of which, such as the *Teatro Farnesiano* at Parma, capable of containing twelve thousand persons, are still standing for the wonder of after ages,—were first built by the Este, Medici, and Gonzaga, and their direction was given to men deeply imbued with classical ideas.

The opening of a theatre was—as it is still in Italy—an occasion for extraordinary rejoicings. Princes and lords came from distant provinces; tournaments and dances preceded and followed the performance; and the people, dazzled by those showy spectacles, were for a long time indifferent to the real merit of the dramatic exhibition.

At first, indeed, only the plays of Plautus and Terentius appeared on the stage. They were generally recited in their original language, but successively they reappeared in

dull translations; and, finally, in still duller imitations.

The first Latin dramas are said to have been performed at Rome in the presence of Pope Sixtus IV., by the members of the academy instituted by Pomponius Lætus, though Latin tragedies had been written as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century, by Albertino Mussato, from Padua, a poet and historian of the age of Dante.* The "Orfeo" of Politiano, rather, indeed, a pastoral drama—if any thing—than a tragedy, was written in two days, and represented before the court of Mantua in 1483, a theatre being built in the greatest haste for that purpose. Three years later a translation of the "Menechmi" of Plautus was performed by the young princes of Hercules I. of Este.

Finally, towards the year 1515, the two earliest specimens of Italian tragedy, the "Sophonisba" of Trissino, and the "Rosmunda" of Rucellai, appeared on the stage at the court of Leo X.; while the "Calandria" of Cardinal Bibbiena, and the "Cassandra" of Ariosto, though written, perhaps, several years before, were only acted in 1513: the former at Rome

* Albertino Mussato, born at Padua; died, 1330. Works: "Historia Augusta"—"Carmina," etc. "Eccerinis" (or Ezzelino da Romano) and "Achilleis," Tragedies. First edition of his works, Venice, 1636.

under the auspices of the same poet; the latter at the court of Alphonso.*

The "Mandragola" of Machiavello soon followed.

Little need be said concerning this early period of our national drama. The Roman theatre itself was little better than a translation from the Greek. Plautus and Terentius are held in greater estimation than Seneca, especially because the best models of Greek comedy have irreparably perished. The Italians, who reproduced the Latins, were thus imitators of imitators. They sought their inspiration in the productions of the dead, and the chill of death seized them.

The tragedies of Trissino and Rucellai bear not unfrequent marks of superior genius; and, as objects of literary curiosity, they deserve considerable attention:—the broad jests of the good Cardinal Bibbiena; the fertility of the in-

* Giovanni Rucellai, a Florentine noble, born, 1475; died, 1526. The "Rosmunda" acted before Leo at Florence, 1515. The "Api," a didactic poem, first edition, 1539.—Bernardo Divizio, born at Bibbiena, 1470; instrumental to the election of Leo X.; created by him a Cardinal, 1513; died, probably poisoned by Leo, who suspected him of aspiring to the pontificate, 1520. His "Calandria," first performed at Urbino, acted at Rome before Leo, 1513. "The Cassaria" and "I suppositi" of Ariosto, written in 1494—1495; acted at Ferrara, 1512, 1513. "La Lena," acted, 1528, etc. The "Mandragola," of Machiavello, acted at Florence, 1512; at Rome, 1518.

ventive faculties of Ariosto; and the sarcastic humour of Machiavello, render the perusal of their comedies still interesting; but as dramatic performances, they, and their almost innumerable rivals and followers, who, during the whole of the sixteenth century, crowded the stage with their second-hand imitations of nature, have been utterly forgotten; nor did all their works prevent Italy from being in this branch of literature widely outrun by her neighbours.

Some of those poets, however, were now made aware of the want of interest which was felt throughout those languid productions, and, faithful in this to the example the first writers had set before them, they thought that tragedy could be enlivened by a revolting exhibition of crimes and atrocities, and comedy by an exuberance of ribaldries and obscenities.

Thus arose and fell the Italian drama of the sixteenth century; and the people, who grew weary of those abominable productions, substituted, for classical tragedy, the melodrama, and for comedy, the old tricks and jests of their harlequins.

One branch alone of that classical dramatic literature deserves to be excepted from the sweeping sentence which I have rather hastily passed against it,—I mean the pastoral drama.

Pastoral poetry was also a derivation from Greece and Rome. Virgil and Theocritus, repeatedly revived in the Latin eclogues of Petrarch and his contemporaries, appeared at last in an Italian garb in the "Arcadia" of Sannazzaro,—a poet whose fame, according to his admirers, was as near that of Virgil as his tomb, which was erected close to that of the Latin bard on Monte Posilipo.

The "Arcadia," a pastoral romance, mixed of verse and prose; elegantly, though unimpassionately written; gave origin to a vast number of pastoral and piscatorial idyls and eclogues, which must also be ranged among the dead productions of a living literature.—By degrees, however, those eclogues began to assume more length and importance, and one of them, "Il Sacrificio," by Agostino Beccari, was acted on the stage at Ferrara, in 1554.

This was the earliest specimen of a pastoral drama, unless we reckon as such the Orfeo of Politiano, a formless and immature performance, which had little or no influence on the progress of that style of writing.—But the "Sacrificio" of Beccari, the "Egle" of Cinthio Giraldi, and other primitive attempts in that style, were soon lost sight of, when the "Aminta" of Tasso appeared on the same stage of Ferrara, in 1572.

Tasso, who had with unequal success exercised

himself in tragedy and comedy during the intervals of repose from his more important undertaking, brought, by this single essay of the "Aminta," the pastoral drama to its highest degree of perfection.

That there was something eminently pastoral in his genius, he had demonstrated in that sketch of rural quiet and happiness—the scene of Erminia among the shepherds of the Jordan, in the seventh canto of his Jerusalem. But the natural elevation of his thoughts bent with difficulty to the humble and *naïve* language of untutored swains; and both in his poem, and in his pastoral drama, he found it necessary to give his shepherds some accessary importance, either by tracing their lineage to the demi-gods of Arcadia, or by supposing them acquainted with the pomps and splendour of courtly life.

It would not be easy to define to what particular merit "Aminta" owed its success on the stage, and continues to form the delight of gentle readers in our days.—It is not certainly owing to its dramatic interest, for it has little or no action; and that little—fault of mechanic ingenuity in the construction of ancient theatres, —is made up by narrations, and almost provokingly kept out of sight of the spectators. But its peculiar charm arises from a series of tender thoughts and feelings, delicate, ingenu-

ous, pure; it is due to an elegant and poetical, but always passionate and true language; to a softness, a languor, an irresistible voluptuousness of style.

The brilliant success of the "Aminta," procured its author a large number of imitators, but only one rival. This was Battista Guarini.

Guarini was born at Ferrara in 1537. He belonged to a noble family, and was a descendant of that illustrious Guarino da Verona, whose name has been mentioned among the greatest revivers of ancient literature in the preceding century. To the distinction of literary fame to which his talents and his early education seemed to have entitled him, he preferred the more dangerous honour of courtly employment.

He was in his early youth trusted by Duke Alphonso with honourable missions to Rome, Turin, and Venice. Finally, in 1575, when, after the desertion of Henry of Valois, the Polish throne was left vacant, Guarini was sent to Warsaw, to negociate Alphonso's election. This embassy was attended with difficulty and danger, from which Guarini could scarcely return with life; but he was only rewarded with the displeasure of his patron, who attributed to his legate's remissness, the failure of his dearest scheme.

Guarini withdrew from Ferrara, and rested for a few years in the bosom of his family, at his villa, where he brought to a close his only poetical work,—"Il Pastor Fido:" ambition or want led him afterwards back to the turmoils of the court. At Ferrara, at Turin, at Florence and elsewhere, he applied for royal patronage, but always with doubtful and precarious success; either owing to the base intrigues of Alphonso, who allowed him no peace any where, or perhaps to his own haughty and jealous temper, which set him at war not only with his friends, but with his children and his wives also, by whose rebellious misconduct he was brought broken-hearted to his grave. He died in 1612, aged seventy-five.

Guarini, on his first admission to the court of Este, was one among the friends of Torquato. But the favour that the young bard enjoyed at court, especially among the ladies of the duchess's suite, soon enlisted Guarini among his bitterest opponents.

Alphonso's sister was not the only lady rejoicing in the sweet name of Leonora. According to the chronicles of the times, there were three of that name; and for some time, it was doubtful for which of them the homage of the timid poet was intended. The youngest and loveliest was a lady from Parma, the Countess

Sanvitale of Scandiano, whose first appearance had created a powerful sensation. Guarini ranged himself among her professed admirers, and beheld with jealousy the marks of favour that the fair one bestowed on the man, in whom he apprehended a rival. The minds of the two accomplished friends were estranged, and an interchange of poetical hostilities ensued.

But the unhappy Torquato could not long be an object of jealousy or resentment. He was soon plunged into an abyss of misery, and Guarini's enmity gave way to more generous feelings; so that when, during his rival's confinement, the verses of the "Jerusalem" were circulated in a state of adulteration and disorder, it was this noble adversary that assiduously laboured to restore the poem to its proper form, and surveyed the edition of 1581.

To the circumstance of this rivalry between the two poets, we owe Guarini's pastoral tragicomedy, "Il Pastor Fido."

In a moment of amorous jealousy, Guarini was reminded of his being born a poet, and of the chances he had of entering into a competition with his adversary, all flushed as he was with the applause with which his "Aminta" had been received. He took pleasure in meeting his rival on his own ground. He reproduced the most striking situations of the drama of

Tasso; and in several passages—especially in the Chorus of the Golden Age—he made use of the same metre, and adopted its rhymes.

The plan of the "Pastor Fido" is as vast and complicated, as that of the "Aminta" is easy and simple. The drama of Guarini is thrice the size of that of Tasso. The former has also the merit of a variety of episodes very happily blended together in one action; and it proceeds with more animation and interest.

Nothing, however, would be more difficult than to institute a fair parallel between these two dramas, so nearly akin, and yet so widely different. They have ever since divided the suffrages of criticism. Tasso is simple even to frigidity,—Guarini is fertile even to exuberance; the "Aminta" is more eminently a pastoral performance,—the "Pastor Fido," more essentially a dramatic production.

Instead of pronouncing our sentence on the respective merit of the two poems, let us rather give our thanks to the three Leonoras, whose romantic admirers knew how to turn to the noblest purposes, even passions of the most dangerous nature.

CHAPTER IV.

LITERATURE, ART, AND SCIENCE, IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Academies—Cinquecentisti—Poetesses—Vittoria Colonna—Artists—Michael Angelo—Leonardo—Raphael—Natural History—Medicine—Mathematics—Scholastic philosophy—History and politics—Machiavello—Guicciardini, etc.

THAT same art of princely policy, that had succeeded in allaying the tumultuous passions of a fierce multitude by ministering to their idle propensities, was equally enabled to subdue the proud spirits of the higher classes by flattering their vanity.

The republican aristocracy of Italy, whose names alone were so far above all courtly distinctions, were gradually won over to the cause of the usurpers of their free rights, by the paltry grant of the empty titles of feudal nobility, and by the institution of idle orders

of knighthood; the poets and scholars of the same age, constituting another, and a more powerful element of moral power—the aristocracy of the mind—were also seduced by a precarious show of courtly favour, and ranged themselves into a privileged class under the auspices of the prince.

Thus, what still remained lofty and generous among those few whose birth or genius raised them above the common level, was either corrupted among the luxuries of a court, or degraded among the inanities of an academy.

Indeed, the court and academy were, in many instances, and to a certain extent, one and the same body. The Italian nobility, who, even during the preceding ages, had generally taken the lead in every branch of literature and art, now condemned to a life of inaction and vassalage, found themselves compelled to turn their attention exclusively to the acquisition of those accomplishments which alone could still secure an honourable and less dangerous distinction.

Libraries and museums of antiquity and art soon became the proudest ornaments of their palaces. The titles of founders or members of an academy were the objects of their most earnest ambition; and their ardour for similar associations was easily communicated to the

chief of the state, who deemed it expedient to watch over their proceedings by granting them his patronage, and sitting among them as their president.

These literary and scientific bodies, which had first risen in the fifteenth century, when, in the eagerness of their classical pursuits, the restorers of ancient classicism had felt the necessity of mutual encouragement and co-operation, soon lost sight of their nobler objects, and degenerated from the dignity of their original institutions.

The fate of Pomponius Lætus, and his associates, to which allusion has already been made, and the dispersion of the Modenese academy in 1542, whose members were charged with heresy, and thrown into the dungeons of the Inquisition; soon made their colleagues in other places aware of the necessity of banishing every subject connected with religion and politics, from their academical transactions.

This spirit of pusillanimous caution, which is but too soon learned among the arts of servitude, remained ever since characteristic of every Italian association even of the most innocent nature; where it is invariably enacted among the fundamental statutes, "that no remark shall be permitted directly or indirectly allusive to the vital topics of church and state."

The academies of the sixteenth century, the "Intronati" at Siena, established 1525; the "Infiammati" of Padua, incorporated 1534; the Florentine academy founded in 1540, and in later times, split into many sections, until it merged into the other association ominously known under the name of "Della Crusca," and other similar societies, springing up in every town and province—were at first merely occupied with philological discussions.

The adoption of the national, or, as it was then called, "vulgar" language, was for many years the object of the warmest debates. Even as late as 1529, a distinguished orator, Romolo Amaseo, in a solemn discourse pronounced before the emperor and pope, insisted on the necessity of proscribing the Italian from literature no less than polite conversation. More lately, Sperone Speroni, a contemporary and a bitter enemy of Tasso—himself an elegant Italian writer, and author of highly reputed moral dialogues—still entertained the same illiberal opinions.*

But, as it has been said, the efforts and example of Bembo—for a time the leading genius

* Romolo Amaseo, born at Udine, 1481; died at Rome, 1552. Sperone Speroni, a Venetian noble, born at Padua, 1500; a friend of Pius IV. and of his nephew, Carlo Borromeo, 1560; a courtier of Alphonso II. of Este, 1561; died, 1588. Best edition of his works, Venice, 1740.

of the age—and still more so the new models of chivalro-epic poetry of Ariosto and Tasso—made the Italians sensible of their injustice; and from that time the living language began to assert an undisputed ascendency over the dead.

This important victory over long-established prejudice was no sooner obtained, than the very name of the national language became a subject of implacable controversies.

Notwithstanding the sentence pronounced by that great father of the language—Dante himself, more than two centuries before—that the Italian was not the peculiar idiom of any town or province, but the result of all the dialects of the peninsula, chosen by the judicious taste of polished writers—yet the academicians of the sixteenth and following centuries, could never agree on any of the appellations of Italian, Tuscan, or Florentine language, till, in 1612, the Florentine academicians seemed to have appropriated it to themselves, by calling their lexicon—that Atlantean work, which had cost them more than fifty years' labour—"Dictionary of the Academy Della Crusca."

The idolatry of those academics for Petrarch was coeval with the revival of Italian literature. Many of those learned associations were

instituted for the sole object of studying and commenting on the verses of that favourite poet. No one could be admitted as a member of the Florentine academy who had not written two volumes at least in illustration of one of his sonnets.

But the imitators of Petrarch were even more numerous than his expounders. Crescimbeni counts no less than six hundred and sixty-one Petrarchists of note during the course of the sixteenth century.

Of all these, however, little or nothing need be said. Genius cannot abide in academies. It stands alone, like the eagle; it shuns assimilation and contact; it feels crowded and fettered within the precincts of an academy; it scorns the narrow-minded pedantry that generally presides over them; it dreads the ridicule that is generally attached to the puerilities inseparable from similar institutions. Academies are essentially the refuge of mediocrity.

There can be no doubt that the academical spirit of that age, as it powerfully contributed to the diffusion, so did it also bring about the enslavement and degradation of literature. It gave rise to a vast number of languid, shallow, effeminate productions, of which, barren imitation was the chief merit; it gave elegance, terseness and harmony of style, an unbounded

ascendency over originality of thought and manliness of feeling; it reproduced the same ideas with an elaborate, artificial verbosity; it exhausted the sources of imagination, froze and withered the heart.

Italy had long been blind to the real merit of those *Cinquecentisti*—by which name are distinguished the imitators or rather parodists of Petrarch in verse, and the writers of the school of Bembo in prose. Their works have been held up in the schools as the unique models of writing. But the Italians of the present age have completely recovered from the idolatrous infatuation of their forefathers. Indeed, as it always happens in moments of sudden reaction, the proscription of the writers of the sixteenth century has been rather hasty and indiscriminate. They proceeded in accordance with the impetuosity of their own Alfieri, who threw from his window the *Galateo* of Monsignor della Casa, startled by that long and unmeaning *Conciossiacosaché*, at the opening of the first period.

And yet it would be injustice to deny some of those poets and orators their tribute of praise. The canzone of Bembo on the death of his brother, a few of Casa's sonnets, and of Celio Magno's religious odes; the patriotic verses of Luigi Alamanni, and other occasional poems

dictated under the influence of true inspiration; a few pages of the "Cortegiano" of Baldassar Castiglione, and of the dialogues of Sperone Speroni, have been and must be preserved from the universal wreck of that exploded literature. Many of their sonnets and songs are far from being deprived of an intrinsic merit; many bear evident marks of original genius, though written by men who seemed to pride themselves in their utter abnegation of originality.*

It has been judiciously remarked, that if any of the verses of those Canzonieri should come to the hands of a very remote posterity, and after the dispersion of the rest of that number-

* Giovanni della Casa, born at Florence, 1503; apostolical secretary, 1538; archbishop of Benevento, 1544; orator of Paul III. to Venice, 1544; orator of Charles V., 1550; secretary to Paul IV., 1555; died, 1556. Works: "Il Galateo" "Degli uffizi,"—Rime,—Lettere,—Orazioni,—etc. "Latina Monumenta." Best edition of his works, Venice, 1752.—Baldassar Castiglione, a Mantuan noble, born, 1478; a courtier of Guidobaldo, duke of Urbino; his ambassador to Henry VII., in London; to Louis XII., in Milan; created Count of Novellara by Francis Maria della Rovere, 1513; his ambassador to Leo X., 1513 to 1520; invited to the court of Mantua, 1522; ambassador of Clement VII. to Charles V., 1524; a favourite with the emperor; criminated by Clement as privy to the disasters of Rome in 1527; died of sorrow at this imputation, 1529. A noble warrior, no less than an accomplished scholar. First edition of "Il Cortegiano," Venice, Aldus, 1528.—Celio Magno, a Venetian noble and secretary to the republic; born, 1536; died, 1602. His famous song "Deus," printed Venice, 1597.

less phalanx of versifiers, they would probably be looked upon with the same feelings of admiration that the few fragments of Greek amatory poetry excite amongst us.

But a book, however good in itself, cannot sail to immortality without standing, in some measure, alone; it must be buoyed up either by the merit of novelty, or by its usefulness or appropriateness of purpose. The literature of the Cinquecentisti had none of these aids to bear it through the tempests of time; and, after an ephemeral and illusory course, it was irretrievably destined to sink.

The fame of the high character of some of those writers, and of the influence they exercised on the vicissitudes of a stormy age, is likely to excite a sufficient interest even after the utter demolition of those literary monuments on which they trusted to have grounded their titles to imperishable renown. Raised by their talents to the highest dignities of the church, honoured with the friendship and confidence of aspiring princes, the amiable, refined, but often unprincipled literati of that century, could boast of having brought to perfection the arts of courtly flattery and servility—far different in practice from the beau-ideal of a courtier's character that Castiglione has abstractedly and theoretically given in his Corte-

giano. The writers of the age of Leo X. could boast of having outdone in this the golden age of Augustus, which they so fondly strove to reproduce.

Even the plain and unambitious Ariosto, no less than the high-minded Torquato, were not entirely exempt from blame; and if we are induced to deal more leniently towards them, and endeavour to forget the meanness with which they prostituted their superhuman gifts to minister to the vanity of worthless patrons, it is only because they received the requital they fully deserved, and atoned for their abjection by a whole life of disappointment and misery.

To this proneness of the generality of the men of letters of the sixteenth century, to unbidden acts of servitude, they added, by way of contrast, an enthusiastic but retrospective fondness for the name of their country; not indeed of the trodden and plundered land that lay bleeding at their feet, but of that classic hero's dust which reminded them at every step, of ages of greatness and victory which could never return.

Confused and humbled by the complication of the unforeseen and unavoidable calamities of Italy; witnesses of the fast-waning splendour of its artificial civilization; and harassed by the pressing foreboding of the final extinction of

its nationality, they dwelt with fondness and pride upon the memories of the past. They affected an utter contempt for all that was modern. The language of the country, its literature, its mediæval art, its morals and manners, its very religion, all was by them forced back to the age of Virgil and Cicero. The glories of ancient Rome were the last citadel in which they entrenched themselves against the prevailing fortune of their barbarous invaders.

Few, however, and rare, were the patriots that had sufficient leisure to give their country more than a fugitive thought. They were all overpowered and carried away by that whirlwind of passion and sin that characterised social life in the sixteenth century. Epicurean sensuality and fashionable scepticism pervaded all ranks. The court and clergy set the first example of unbridled licentiousness; it spread like a contagion to the lowest orders; it gave its tone to letters and arts.

Lukewarm and passive in the cause of their country, though deeply engaged in politics and diplomacy; indifferent even to infidelity in matters of religion, though officially obliged to fight the battles of popery and the Inquisition, the poets and scholars of the age of Leo X., of Clement VII., and Paul III., were only eager in their pursuit of pleasure.

They never suffered even their ambitious views to interfere with their amorous propensities. Bembo would never consent to part with his fair Morosina, though that dangerous connexion exposed him to the displeasure of his patron, Leo X., and was, perhaps, the only obstacle on his way to the papal throne. Casa owed it to a few lascivious poems, if he lost his chances of obtaining a cardinal's hat; for the sake of which, however, he did not hesitate to make himself a minister of the Holy Office, during his legation to Venice, and carried his interested zeal so far as to drive from Italy Paul Vergerio, bishop of Friuli, one of the noblest champions of religious freedom. Molza renounced the sweets of domestic life, forfeited his paternal inheritance, incurred frequent personal dangers to run after other people's wives, and ended, by an ignominious death, an existence which he had wasted in the extravagances of a fickle and wanton gallantry.*

The indulgence in every kind of illicit intercourse, was never visited by the censure of public opinion, so far, at least, as it was carried on in a manner consistent with good taste and

* Francesco Maria Molza, a Modenese nobleman, born, 1489; died, 1544. Works: Rime, Novelle—"La Ninfa Tiberina"—"Ritratto di Giulia Gonzaga," etc. Best edition, Bergamo, 1747.

refinement. Men of talent, especially poets and artists, seemed to avail themselves, in real life, of that unbounded latitude that Horace had liberally allowed them in their works of imagination:—

> ——"Pictoribus atque poetis
> Quidlibet audendi semper fuit æqua potestas."

Raphael pined away in his studio for the absence of his Fornarina, and his condescending patron sent for her, lest the sorrow of the love-sick painter should interfere with the progress of his works.

The epoch of the greatest triumph of letters and arts, that golden age when popes called round their shrines such men as Bembo and Sadoleto, Contarini, Flaminio, and the accomplished, though inconstant and insincere Englishman, the Cardinal Pole—the age of Leo and Clement—was also that of the utmost depravation of morals.

It gained ground with an alarming progress, especially in Rome, down to the close of the pontificate of Paul III., when the salutary check of the Reformation began to recall the reluctant prelates to a necessary sense of their duty.

Learning and genius, more than wisdom and honesty, presided over the council of the Vati-

can; nor could it have been in the power of any man to resist the tendency of a perverted age. Adrian VI., who, with more zeal than discernment, thought he could banish vice from his court by dismissing the secretaries of his predecessor, and the poets and scholars that constituted its ornament, only gained the reputation of a barbarian; and after his death the indignant Romans crowned his physician as the deliverer of their country.

The corrupting poison had penetrated the most vital parts of society. It was the age when so vile a being as Pietro Aretino, could boast of the favours of the greatest monarchs, and of his intimacy with the noblest geniuses; when he could with impunity attack the most unspotted reputation, aim the shafts of his malignity against Vittoria Colonna, and, with a rare impudence, upbraid Michael Angelo for the nakedness of the figures of his Last Judgment.*

* Pietro Aretino, called the "divine," and the scourge of princes, born, 1492; attracted to the courts of Leo X., and Clement VII., 1517; banished from Rome for misdemeanour, 1524; a favourite with Giovanni de Medici, the famous condottiere, and Francis I. of France, 1524, 1525; returned to Rome, 1526; in love with a kitchen-maid, and stabbed one of his rivals; returned to John de Medici · this warrior died in his arms, 1526; a favourite with Gritti, doge of Venice, 1527; received a gold necklace and an offer of knighthood from Charles V., 1530; received a necklace from Francis I., 1533; received a pension from Charles V., 1536; lived with the Emperor in the greatest intimacy; applied to Paul III. for a

As it invariably happens in dissolute ages, woman, in the sixteenth century, had fallen into the utmost degree of moral degradation. In imitation of the ages of Pericles and Augustus, the Rome of Leo X. had raised a throne, almost an altar to prostitution.

Tullia d' Aragona, a syren, who, to the charms of a truly Roman beauty, added the advantages of a very high, though illegitimate birth, and uncommon accomplishments; an unrivalled singer; and one of the greatest female poets of her age, like one of the ancient courtezans, could boast of having mustered in the ranks of her admirers the proudest spirits of her age.—The illustrious and short-lived Cardinal Hippolito de Medici; the Florentine patriot, Filippo Strozzi; Varchi, the historian; Bernardo Tasso, and other poets without number, all acknowledged her supreme, and oftentimes capricious and tyrannical rule.*

cardinal's hat, 1534; knighted and presented with 1000 crowns by Julius III., 1550; embraced and kissed by that pope in presence of his court, 1553; a friend of Titian; his comical adventure with Tintoretto, 1544; presented with 300 gold crowns by Henry VIII.; belaboured and wounded by the agents of the Earl of Arundel, 1547; died of a fit of laughter on hearing the infamies of his sisters, 1559. Works: "Sonetti Lussuriosi,"—"Capitoli Satirici,"—"Commedie,"—"Ragionamenti," etc., chiefly printed in Venice during his lifetime.

* "Rime di Tullia d'Aragona e di diversi a Lei." Venice, 1547—60.

She divided her glory with another renowned beauty, Imperia Cortisana Romana, "worthy of so great a title," as it was said in her epitaph, —a lady of talent and taste who received the homages of Sadoleto, among others, and obtained such titles to immortality as it was in the power of his verses to bestow.

Her daughter—whom the fond courtezan had raised up to a life of honour and modesty—found herself, after her death, exposed to the unwelcome attentions of Cardinal Petrucci, the same who shortly afterwards perished in his attempt against the life of Leo X.; and so arduous was it then for unprotected virtue to find shelter against enterprising libertinism, that, unable otherwise to free herself from the prelate's importunities, she destroyed herself by poison.

But the sixteenth century was an age of contrast, exhibiting at once, and bringing into contact, the opposite extremes, as if to show that, however Providence may suffer evil to prevail, it is never without enabling us to discern and to loathe it, by putting it to the test of luminous examples of good.—The age of Tullia d'Aragona,—nay, the very age of that infamy of her sex, Lucretia Borgia, could boast of the greatest model of feminine perfection—Vittoria Colonna.

Vittoria was the daughter of Fabrizio Colonna, one of the last heroes of warlike Italy; and who, together with Prospero and other members of his family, followed the standards of Charles V., and revived the lustre of the name of his house, which, under Alexander VI., had been utterly eclipsed. Her mother was Anna di Montefeltro, a princess of the proud house of Urbino. She was born in 1490.

At the age of four, Vittoria was betrothed to Ferdinand d'Avalos, marquis of Pescara, one of the best generals of Charles V. Engaged in the disastrous wars of that age, Pescara lived only at rare and short intervals with his marchioness, who had established her residence in the Isle of Ischia. He was taken prisoner at Ravenna in 1512, and dangerously, and, as it proved, mortally wounded at Pavia in 1525.

Francis I. of France, it will be remembered, was completely routed, and taken prisoner, in that momentous encounter, and all Italy lay at the mercy of his fortunate rival. It was only by that sudden event that the Italian politicians felt the utter helplessness of their situation. Unable openly to enter the field against the Austrian conqueror, already master of Naples and Sicily, no less than of Spain, Flanders, and Germany, they had recourse to a conspiracy,—

that last expedient, which had proved so often inefficient and fatal.

The throne of Milan was occupied by the last heir of Ludovico Sforza il Moro,—of him who had expiated his unnatural treason against his country, by a perpetual captivity in France. Ludovico had left two sons, Maximilian and Francis Maria, who were both successively invested with the precarious sovereignty of Milan. The eldest had been compelled to resign in favour of Francis after the battle of Marignano. His youngest brother had been raised to the throne under the patronage of Charles V., in 1521, but was in fact placed at the discretion of his imperial lieutenants.

Girolamo Morone, chancellor of the duke, a man of consummate experience in the affairs of state, beheld with resentment the indignities endured by his sovereign and country from the insolence and rapacity of Germans and Spaniards. He conceived the generous plan of ridding Italy at once of the presence of her foreign dominators. Pope Clement VII., and the other Italian courts, lent a willing ear to his daring, yet plausible suggestions. Louisa of Savoy, regent of France during her son's captivity, acceded to the negociation. England and Switzerland promised their aid and subsidies.

Pescara was, at that time, generalissimo of

the armies of Charles V. in Italy. He was an Italian by birth, though issued from a Spanish family, established at Naples for two generations; but he affected Spanish habits and feelings, and prided himself in his Spanish descent. The conspirators laid the strongest temptations before him to win him to their cause. They offered him the independent sovereignty of Naples, which was then placed under his military rule.

Pescara entered into the designs of the league. He gained a full insight of their secret manœuvres, and enabled himself, by a double treason, either to secure their victory against the emperor, or to deliver them to his vengeance.

The conduct of France determined his choice. Aware that Louisa of Savoy was ready to sacrifice to her own the interests of Italy, he threw off the mask, and betrayed his accomplices.

Vittoria Colonna was then residing at her castle in Ischia, and received only vague and few reports of her husband's conduct. It is more than probable that she never had but a very indistinct idea of those disgraceful transactions. She seemed to consider her interference in political matters as an act of unfeminine presumption. Only apprehending

lest her husband's ambition might seduce him from the path of duty, she warned him by letters against the dangers that would, in those troublous times, beset his career, and conjured him to listen only to the dictates of his conscience and honour.

Had she been acquainted with the full extent of his double dealing and perfidy, issued as he was from a family that had espoused the interests of Charles V., and attached to her husband by the warmest affection,—she would have joined in the universal execration that accompanied Pescara to his grave, into which he descended a few months after the consummation of his treason, in consequence of his wounds.

Left alone in her castle, still in the flower of her age, the Marchioness of Pescara consecrated her life to mourn over the loss of her unworthy consort. She established herself successively at Naples, Rome and Viterbo, whence she repaired to a convent in Orvieto, and was there visited with a reverence akin to religion by the most distinguished personages. Among her intimates were Bernardino Ochino, Carnesecchi, and other followers of the reformed doctrines, a circumstance that led many to suppose in her some inclination towards their religious opinions.

Her time was divided between the exercises of Christian duties, and the cultivation of poetry.

A taste for this noble art prevailed in that century among the ladies belonging to the noblest houses in Italy. The historians number no less than fifty female poets, who left in their works sufficient claims to the admiration of posterity. Among the most renowned were Veronica da Gambara, like Vittoria, a pattern of conjugal faith and devotion* —and the tender and ill-fated Gaspara Stampa, the Sappho of Italy, who was believed to have died of ill-requited love, until, in our days, Hallam has partly broken the charm for three centuries attached to the romance of her life.†

But above these, and above all, the name of Vittoria Colonna has been placed by the unanimous consent of her age.‡

Her canzone to the memory of her husband, and several of her religious poems, are among the most valuble productions of the Cinque-

* Veronica da Gambara, born, 1485; married to Giberto da Correggio, 1509; widowed, 1518; visited in her retreat by Charles V., 1531; died, 1550; her works printed Brescia, 1759.

† Gaspara Stampa, born, 1524; died of love, 1554; her poems printed, Venice, 1554.

‡ First edition of Vittoria Colonna's poems, Parma, 1538; "Rime della Diva Vittoria Colonna di Pescara," Venice, 1544.

centisti. The earnestness and intensity of her sorrow,—the sincerity of her devotion, breathe from every line of her truly inspired strains; and the impression we receive from them is the more powerful, as we compare it with the vapid and affected effusions of her contemporaries.

Among the friends of that greatest of Italian poetesses, there was one, whose loftiness of genius and character equally gave him the highest claims to her unbounded consideration;—one who was alone worthy of her—Michael Angelo.

The friendly intercourse between those two noble and pure beings, and the interchange of poetical declarations of their warmest sympathy, I dare not, and yet I know not by what other name to call it but—love.

It was nothing indeed like the ardent passion that alternately raises us so far above, and plunges us so much below our human nature; for a heart like Vittoria's could only feel that passion once, and Michael Angelo's never; neither was it any thing like that cold and hypocritical idolatry that the imitators of Petrarch mistook for Platonism:—it was the union of two kindred souls, who needed each other's encouragement to bear through the disenchantments of life, and looked to each other as living personifications of that ideal

virtue, on which, notwithstanding the corruptive influence of the age, they persisted in placing their unshaken belief.

It is reported of Michael Angelo, that he stood by the death-bed of that rare woman, in Rome; that he kissed the cold hand which she held out to him, and was heard afterwards to regret—"that the awe of that solemn moment had deterred him from equally kissing her forehead and face."

Vittoria Colonna died 1547.

It is well known that the painter of the Last Judgment, the sculptor of Moses, and architect of St. Peter, was likewise a poet. Dante, forgotten by the effeminate academicians of the sixteenth century, had still a throne in the stern and manly heart of the independent artist. The Divine Comedy was his inseparable companion. He treasured up in his mind the lofty images of the Ghibeline poet, and gave them life in the works of his pencil and chisel.

His few verses, which he seemed to write in a careless haste, are all of a lofty and sublime cast; his style has something of that bold and terrible manner, and bears the marks of that sovereign will, before which the hardest materials bent in obedience. Michael Angelo in verse, and Machiavello in prose, are, perhaps,

the most powerful masters of style in Italy between Dante and Alfieri.

Upon the margins of his favourite copy of the Divine Comedy, Michael Angelo had pencilled illustrations nearly to every verse of the poem. The two kindred geniuses had met there in their loftiest conceptions. Long after the artist's death, that book, being conveyed from Rome to Leghorn by the grand duke's order, was lost in a shipwreck. Can there be a greater treasure buried in the bosom of the deep?

That versatility and universality of genius, by which Michael Angelo was enabled to excel in every branch of art, was not exclusively peculiar to him. On the contrary we find among the earliest artists that same encyclopedical taste that prevailed among the lovers of science and literature.

Few men ever deserved a higher seat in the temple of immortality than Leo Battista Alberti, who was among the most eminent friends of Piero and Lorenzo de Medici. Besides his success as a painter, sculptor, architect, and musician, and the very able works he wrote on all the fine arts; besides his merits as a poet and classical scholar, he was deeply versed in several branches of philosophy; and we are indebted to him for the discovery of the Camera

Optica, which preceded by nearly a century the Camera Obscura, the invention of another equally vast, though more eccentric genius, Giambattista della Porta.*

But the fame to which Alberti was so amply entitled, was eclipsed by a man, who, like him, aspired to invade every region in the realms of the mind, with a success equal to his daring—Leonardo da Vinci.

Leonardo seemed, towards the close of his life, to have become indifferent to the glory he had won by his works of art and by his writings, which had laid the foundation of the theory of art,†—all-absorbed as he was in his scientifical researches. Charged by the Duke of Milan with the direction of those hydraulic works by which the agriculture of the Lombard plain stands, perhaps, even in our days, unrivalled in Europe, Leonardo made himself equal to his task by plunging deeply into the mathematical and physical sciences, and by comparing the results of his own experience with what he found among the records of antiquity. The

* Leon Battista Alberti, born towards the year 1400; died, 1472. His greatest work: "De re Ædificatoria," Florence, 1485.—Giambattista Porta, born at Naples, 1540; died, 1615. His famous work: "Magia Naturalis," best edition, 1589.

† The famous treatise on the Art of Painting by Leonardo, first printed, Paris, 1651.

canal of the Mortesana, above two hundred miles in length, carried across the arduous mountain passes of the Valtelina, and the territory of Chiavenna, to conduct the waters of the Adda to the gates of Milan, was achieved by Leonardo contemporaneously with his "Last Supper."

After his removal to France in 1515, his ardour for the natural sciences, which had already considerably interfered with his success as an artist, at Florence and Rome, seemed to engross all his attention. The copious fragments of his manuscripts still lying inedited in the Parisian libraries, would be sufficient, if published, to operate a revolution in our ideas concerning the history of modern discovery.

There seems to be scarcely any among the great results to which Galileo, Kepler, and Copernicus were led long after him, which was not, though imperfectly, and, as it were, only instinctively, anticipated by Leonardo.*

The talents of the last of that great triumvirate of art—Raphael—were not less extensive than those of Vinci and Buonarotti; though the laborious task which was set to him by his patrons, did not allow the continuator of the "Loggie" of Bramante to give sufficient time

* A short account of the inedited works of Da Vinci was given by Venturi, an Italian resident in Paris in 1797.

to sculpture and architecture, in which he otherwise equally excelled.

Born under the unfavourable circumstances of inferior rank and penury, Raphael was easily induced to court, or compelled to abide the favour of the great. Upright and pure as he was in his principles, and blameless in his conduct, we would, however, look in vain to him for that proud and even stubborn self-respect which characterized Leonardo and Michael Angelo, and which was, perhaps, in them, the result of their republican descent.

Raphael was the first painter-courtier.

Brought into contact with the imperious and irascible Julius II., and the peevish Leo X., he knew how to win the good-will of both. Disinterested and unambitious to a degree that is rarely found among the suitors of glory, he loved art for its own sake, and worked with equal earnestness and industry for his wealthy friend, Agostino Ghigi, as he did at the Vatican. His apparent subserviency to the caprices of his great patrons, is rather attributable to an almost feminine desire of pleasing and obliging, than to any dread he stood in of them, or to any selfish expectation of honours and rewards.

An inmate of the court of Rome during nearly all his lifetime, Raphael lived and died

rather as the friend than the servant of the popes. He was the Petrarch, as Michael Angelo was the Dante of art.

Still, his example soon became contagious among the artists of that and the following ages, and proved in the end fatal to the independence and dignity of art, even as the undiscerning benevolence of Petrarch had a baneful influence on the true interests of literature. Genius began henceforth to be valued in proportion as it was rewarded and applauded at court; and a notion prevailed, which is not utterly exploded even in our days, ascribing the state of decline and sterility into which the fine arts have fallen, to the cessation of that patronage that fostered them during the palmy reigns of Julius and Leo;—as if those popes had themselves created art, whereas they only inherited it together with that last breath of Italian liberty which had called into action the energies of a naturally imaginative people, and which came faint and exhausted to expire in their arms.

Had it not been for Julius or Leo, it is doubtful indeed whether the Sixtine chapel had ever been painted, or the dome of St. Peter's been raised to the sky; but Raphael would have always been Raphael, even if, like Correggio, he had never been brought into contact with

the models of antiquity; if he had never crossed the threshold of a lordly palace, and had ended, like him, by dying of a pleurisy occasioned by the fatigues of his pedestrian journey home, loaded with the vile coppers with which the canons of the cathedral of Parma had remunerated his master-piece.

The death of Leonardo and Raphael, which took place in the same year, 1520, was the close of the supreme period of art. The rest of Michael Angelo's life, who survived his two rivals for nearly forty-four years, was chiefly spent in bringing into light the manifold conceptions to which he had already given life in his teeming brain. As he had beheld and mainly contributed to the success of the Roman and Florentine schools, so did he witness the diffusion of art throughout the other provinces of Italy, and the gradual rise of those Lombard, Venetian, and Neapolitan schools, which Titian, Correggio, Guido, and the Caracci, were soon to raise to the level of his own archetypal genius.*

To follow the fine arts in their further progress, enters not into the plan of this work. As I shall not therefore have frequent oppor-

* Antonio Allegri da Correggio, born, 1496; died, 1534.—Tiziano Vecellio di Cadore, 1477—1576.—Ludovico Caracci, of Bologna, 1553—1619.—Agostino Caracci, 1557—1602.—Annibale Caracci, 1560—1609.—Guido Reni, of Bologna, 1573—1642.

tunities to revert to the subject, I shall not dismiss it without giving a few words to the famous goldsmith, sculptor, and engraver—to the restless libertine and adventurer, Benvenuto Cellini.

Owing to recent translations by men of eminent genius, and to new editions of the original, in Italy and abroad, the life of Benvenuto has been daily acquiring a new interest in the eyes of the world. Independent of the importance attached to such a work as a manual of the history of art, that autobiography is also invaluable for the fair insight it gives of the stirring drama of life that was acting under his eyes.

From the lowest to the highest ranks; from the *osterie* of the Trastevere and Mercato Nuovo, to the Pitti and Vatican palaces, Cellini describes and portrays with an easy, unconscious ingenuousness. The proudest characters, the loftiest geniuses among his contemporaries, are introduced as his familiars, stripped of their robes of state, of all the *prestige* of their fame, such as heroes are said to appear before their valets.

Cellini is the Gil Blas of the sixteenth century.

Whilst dictating in his rude provincial idiom to one of his apprentices in his workshop at Florence, the memoirs of his life, Cellini assumes the grave and earnest tone of one who

feels he is narrating the exploits of a hero. The riots and scuffles, in which he was desperately fond of engaging, dealing as freely with his knife as he did with his chisel; his amours, his revels, dangers and hair-breadth escapes, are told with an air of bravado and humour, by which his very deeds of murder and libertinism seem rather to call forth our mirth than our censure.

But the work suddenly assumes the importance of an historical narrative, when Cellini represents himself as appointed by Pope Clement VII. to the direction of the artillery of the castle of St. Angelo, to which the pontiff repaired for safety during the ever memorable siege of Rome by the constable of Bourbon, in 1527.

Were we to credit the writer's own words, the falconet that struck the French renegade from his scaling ladder in the first heat of the assault, and felled him dead at the foot of the battered wall, was levelled and fired by Cellini himself. He was equally successful in wounding and disabling the Prince of Orange, who assumed the command of the besieging army after the constable's fall.

The horrors of that disaster were no sooner over, than Cellini was thrown into the dungeons of that very castle he had so valiantly defended,

under a false charge of having, during the tumults of the siege, robbed the Vatican of the crown jewels. The bold adventurer broke through the bars of his dungeon, and scaled the castle walls. In this last attempt he fell from a dangerous height, and was, all maimed and bruised, led back to his chains.

The interference of Francis I. of France, prevailed at last over the injustice and ingratitude of Clement. Cellini crossed the Alps, and having settled at Fontainebleau, he basked for some time in the sunshine of royal favour. But driven from court by the frowns of the king's favourite, the Duchesse d'Estampes, he wandered for a few years from town to town, till he definitively settled at Florence. He died in 1570, aged seventy.*

That spirit of classical inquiry which characterized the intellectual tendency of the ages of Cosmo and Lorenzo de Medici, had made the Italian scholars fully acquainted with the results to which the natural and mathematical sciences had been brought by the philosophers of antiquity.

The elements of modern science were therefore essentially founded on translations and commentaries on classical works. Pliny, Aristotle, and Dioscorides, awakened an universal

* The life of Cellini, first published, Naples, 1730.

curiosity for natural history. Hippocrates and Galen operated an equal revolution in the medical sciences, which had but too long obeyed the influence of Arabian empiricism. To the translations of Euclid we are indebted for the revival of mathematics.

The first feeling of those grateful scholars, when brought into contact with the transcendent genius of Greece and Rome, was unbounded, passive veneration. For a long lapse of years they were lost in awe and wonderment, and thought, like Alexander, that their fathers had conquered all the realms of nature, and left nothing undone.

But a state of inactive and stationary contemplation is incompatible with the natural aspirations of the human mind. By degrees a vague desire was engendered of putting the soundness of ancient theories to the test of immediate experiment; and it was not always possible to reconcile authority with irrefragable fact. Hence the yoke of superstition was gradually shaken; salutary doubt arose, and inquiry redoubled.

The wonders of the remote climates of the far East, and of the newly-discovered Western continent, had meanwhile laid open before them amazing truths. Columbus and Vasco de Gama had, at one stroke, overthrown the old geological and geographical edifices. The botanic

gardens recently planted in several Italian universities, were fragrant with the perfumes of a thousand exotics, unknown to antiquity. The acute observations of Cesalpino, and the gigantic labours of Aldrovandi, had been proportionate to that sudden widening of the kingdom of creation. Before the close of the sixteenth century, few of the mysteries of nature were left unveiled. All that remained for posterity was the work of classification and system.

Equally important discoveries attended the researches of the learned on the most admirable of organised beings. A professor at Bologna, by name Mondino, had, towards the beginning of the fourteenth century, first attempted to emancipate anatomy from the tyranny of the pious superstition of paganism and early Christianity. But two centuries later, the importance of Mondino's discoveries were superseded by the results of the researches of Vesalius, a native of Brussels, but for many years a professor at Padua—and by those of his more illustrious Italian pupils, Falloppio and Eustachio.

So it was that medicine obtained its most important results in Italy: some of the physicians of that country, especially Cesalpino, Acquapendente, and even Fra Paolo Sarpi, laying, as it is well known, no slight claims to the honour of having either plainly alluded to, or

very nearly accomplished, that wonderful discovery, of which an Englishman gave the definitive demonstration—the circulation of the blood.*

The progress of mathematics was effected under analogous circumstances.

At the epoch of the storming of Brescia by the French in 1512, among the defenceless crowd that fled before the fury of an exasperated soldiery, there was a houseless, nameless boy, the son of destitute parents, who, almost mortally wounded in that affray, had, with his widowed mother, taken shelter in the cathedral of the town, and there sank bleeding and lifeless in her arms. That boy recovered from his wounds, but not from a severe cut in his mouth which left him a stammerer for life; and won him from his contemporaries a name which has since become immortal,—that of the restorer of mathematics, Tartaglia.

To him the science of algebra was indebted for the solution of cubic equations. He laid the foundation of modern military engineering by his theory on the flight and path of cannon balls and shells; and, together with two of his successors, gave his countrymen considerable titles to the glory of inventors of modern tactics

* Fabricio d'Acquapendente, born, 1537; professor at Padua, 1565; died, 1619. "De Venorum Ostiolis," Padua, 1603—"Opera omnia," Leipsic, 1687.

and military architecture, of which they were afterwards partly defrauded by the unscrupulous rivalry of the French.*

Cardan, his contemporary, and, for some time, his adversary, did not contribute less than Tartaglia to the progress of mathematics, though not, perhaps, endowed with an equally profound and energetic mind; but the reputation that he simultaneously acquired as an unrivalled physician, an independent philosopher, and universal scholar; his wild, vain, ungovernable disposition, so nearly bordering on sheer insanity; the honours and offers he received from the most distant courts of Europe; the extent of his works; the more than romantic adventures of his life, of which he himself gave a most curious narrative; the very errors and superstitions to which he blindly abandoned himself,—render him an object of far greater interest than other perhaps more eminent or more useful geniuses.

* Niccolò Tartaglia, born Brescia, 1506; died at Venice, 1557; translations of Euclid and Archimedes, Venice, 1543. Original works: "Quesiti et Inventioni Diverse," Venice, 1546. "Nova Scientia Inventa," Venice, 1534. "Trattato di Numeri e di Misure," Venice, 1556—1560.—Girolamo Cardano, born Pavia, 1501; died, 1576, at Rome. His works: "De Methodo Medendi," etc., Venice, 1531. "Ars Magna"—"De Vita Propria," etc., etc. Complete edition, 10 vols., folio, Lyons, 1663.

To sum up all his extravagances in one characteristic trait, be it sufficient to state, on the authority of two contemporary historians, that he starved himself in order to fulfil his own prediction of his death.

It was by the works of these mathematicians and their contemporaries, that astronomy was freed from the trammels of astrological speculations, and grounded on the sure basis of mathematical laws. It was in consequence of the light that they spread throughout Europe, that the Copernican system,—which had been only timidly and hypothetically announced by its illustrious inventor, in 1543, and by him dedicated to the holiness of Paul III., as if with the hope of propitiating that authority, from which he apprehended the most serious hostilities,—found its most determined supporters in Italy.

Guided by their theories, and aided by two other eminent astronomers, Gregory XIII. was enabled to proceed to his reform of the calendar in 1582. To them, in short, is due the glory of having levelled the path on which modern philosophy was soon to tread with gigantic strides. Tartaglia was the precursor of Galileo.

Galileo Galilei was born at Pisa in 1564, and appointed professor of mathematics in that

university in 1589. Before 1592 he had made his first experiments on the fall of bodies. Still his main discoveries do not, strictly speaking, belong to the sixteenth century.

Born at the close of that age of wonders, only two days after Michael Angelo's death, and when the other great luminaries, Ariosto, Machiavello, and Tartaglia, had long since disappeared—rising alone like the spring star of Arcturus, shining with its solitary ray on the east, while the cluster of the winter stars, Procyon, Orion, and Sirius, are setting on the west—Galileo is the first of another era; he stands at the head of another set of illustrious men, who were, once more, and for the last time, to assert for their country the boast of supremacy of genius.

The investigation of the laws of nature, however powerfully efficient in breaking the bonds of ancient authority; however, in the end, attended with entire success, was, nevertheless, considerably retarded, and, to some extent, counteracted by the tyranny of the different systems of scholastic philosophy.

The Platonic academy, opened at Florence by Cosmo de Medici, and which, as we have seen, had partly shaken that old edifice of error and prejudice, called, in the middle ages, Aristotelian philosophy, had been broken up at the

epoch of the first expulsion of the Medici, in 1495. Its members had rallied after the return of that family in 1512, but were soon afterwards implicated in a conspiracy against Cardinal Julio de Medici, and by him utterly and violently dispersed.

The downfal of the academy brought with it, as a necessary consequence, the triumph of the Peripatetic school.

In consequence of the greater proficiency of the scholars of the sixteenth century, in the Greek language, they were now enabled to resort to the original works of their great master; and the doctrines of the Stagyrite, more directly drawn from their legitimate sources, once more assumed their wonted ascendency in the schools.

But the learned of that age were no longer men to submit with blind deference to the dictates of any master, alive or dead. Facts, glaring facts, were daily brought into light by recent discoveries, against which, ancient authority could but indifferently stand its ground. Aristotle could no longer be the God Terminus of science.

The efforts of his advocates were, consequently, directed to reconcile his exploded dogma to the irresistible results of experimental knowledge. Instead of obstinately resisting

the intellectual movement of the age, by the dead weight of his doctrines, they endeavoured, by a stretch of the sense, by a time-serving interpretation of his words, to bring him up to the level of their age:—as the mountain would not go to Mahomet, they felt Mahomet must go to the mountain.

This last effort of Peripatetic philosophy—this attempt to force Aristotle to say what he never dreamt of, had split his disciples into different factions, according as they either rigidly worshipped the Greek idol himself, or, hoping to find a more yielding ground, they bowed to the altars of his commentator, Averrhoes.

There were catholic and heretic Aristotelians.

Whilst these two parties fought their battles with all the inveteracy of sectarian fury, the scattered fragments of the Platonic school inveighed against both of them with equal virulence; nor could they be brought to any reconciliation by the efforts of some of their good-natured contemporaries, who having, as they thought, fathomed the most recondite depths of knowledge, and thoroughly studied the merit of the arguments of each party, came to the conclusion that they were all equally right or equally wrong; and that they wrangled, and quarrelled, and tore each other to pieces, to no good purpose whatever.

In the midst of this deplorable waste of mental faculties, Bernardino Telesio, a daring spirit, was finally enabled to impugn all authorities, and laid the basis of a new independent school of philosophy, in which reason was eventually to vindicate its unlimited ascendency over authority. The opinions of Telesio, objects, as they were, of the animadversions of the church, found warm partizans among the bravest spirits of his age. The versatile mind of the hot-headed Cardan; the deep, though cloudy genius of the ill-fated Giordano Bruno; and, in later times, Tommaso Campanella and Galileo, exultingly stood forth for the cause of intellectual emancipation. The influence of Telesio's theories was felt in the Italian schools for a long lapse of years, and equally presided over the construction of the philosophical systems of Gassendi and Des Cartes in France, of Hobbes and Locke in England.*

* Bernardino Telesio, born at Cosenza, 1509; died, 1588. "De Rerum Natura," Rome, 1565. Miscellaneous works, Venice, 1590.—Giordano Bruno, born at Nola towards 1550; banished from Naples by the catholics, 1580; banished by the Calvinists from Geneva, 1582; obliged to quit Paris, 1584; banished from Wurtemburg by the Lutherans, 1586; persecuted at Frankfort for religious opinions, 1590; apprehended at Padua, and tried at Venice, 1592; burnt alive at Rome, 1600. Works: "De l' Infinito, Universo et Mondi"—"De Umbris Idearum"—"Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante," etc., etc. Frankfort, 1590.

But in the exultation of their happy enfranchisement; in the consciousness of their mental forces, and the intoxication of success, many of those philosophers, it must be avowed, fell into the extremes of mad presumption, and transcendent audacity. Their theories on the system of the universe, on the nature of the Deity and the human soul, were not unfrequently written in open defiance of all revelation, no less than of other less sacred authorities; and it can no longer be a matter of surprise to hear, that hardly any of them, whatever the standard under which they ranged themselves, escaped the charge of deism, pantheism, and even of open infidelity, and materialism.

The maze of sophisms and subtleties in which all of them involved themselves, in their dull and obscure writings, afforded but too ample means of proving any thing against them.

The churches, especially that of Rome, resorted to violent means, to silence their disputes in blood; and the intolerance and illiberality with which the different parties denounced each other before their common enemy, most deplorably aided the work of persecution. The bulls of excommunication, and the Index, were soon found inefficient to quell their rebellious spirits, and the Inquisition

resorted to its odious instruments of torture and death.

An illustrious physician, Severi, was beheaded and thrown into the flames at Modena. Barozzi, a mathematician, expired among the torments of a trial for which age and infirmity unfitted his exhausted frame. The mild and modest Telesio struggled against Rome all his lifetime, and was brought by chagrin to an untimely grave. Finally, Giordano Bruno, to whom no rest was granted, after having been equally expelled from all religious communions, fell into the hands of the Inquisition at Venice, was sent over to Rome, and there burnt at the stake.

We must deplore the means resorted to by the church to bring those ill-advised philosophers back to the creed of their country; but we cannot deny that some of them set no limits to their freedom of inquiry; that often their doctrines, were it not for their egregious absurdity, might have proved dangerous and fatal; and that they, in some instances, provoked the rigour of the most lenient and reluctant authorities, by a rash, uncalled-for defiance, not unlike those religious enthusiasts whose wanton obstinacy and importunity frustrated the forbearance of their pagan and Mahometan rulers.

The follies and extravagances of those founders of Italian philosophy, extended their pernicious influence to the remotest posterity. They left us an inheritance of doubt and presumption, which, rather crushed than checked by the rigid discipline of our Italian schools, made us not unfrequently cherish error with all the secret fondness of forbidden enjoyment. A spirit of opposition, naturally called forth by the Roman Index, the censorship, the thousand shackles by which thought is trammelled in Italy, pervaded the daring youth of the universities, many of whom seemed to court the fame of a free-thinker, and *esprit-fort*, as the most enviable distinction, and who associated the notions of cold scepticism and infidelity with the most generous feelings of patriotism.

The political sciences and philosophical history, of which Machiavello had laid the first elements, began to engage the attention of his contemporaries. It has already been mentioned above, that the Lombard and Tuscan republics, ever since their happiest days of freedom and conquest, had charged the worthiest and most active citizens with the compilation of national annals.—Italy was almost by birthright the land of history. The memories of past ages were written in indelible characters on the monuments of the country. Every plough-

man had a tale to tell of the field he tilled. The plains of Lombardy were heaving with mounds covering the remains of all nations.

For a long lapse of years, Italy had been to Europe, what Europe was afterwards to become to the rest of the world,—an organised body of highly civilized states, different in their origin, laws, and constitutions; divided by local jealousies and opposite interests; constantly engaged in their endeavours to establish a political equilibrium by the manœuvres of a wary and even unprincipled diplomacy; baffled oftentimes in their ambitious schemes, and brought into sudden collision, but still deriving new energies from their very rivalry, and promoting, with their own, the interests of social progress.

Of this primeval political system, which was, in later times, to preside over the destinies of nations, the Italians early gave theoretic no less than practical essays. As they had been the first among whom true social life was fully developed, so they were also the first to write. The age of writers closely followed in that country the age of heroes; rather, I should say, that the same men were both heroes and writers.

Nothing, in fact, can be perused with a deeper interest than the often ignorant but

always conscientious chronicles of republican Italy; such as the writings of Malespini, Dino Compagni, and the three Villani at Florence; Albertino Mussato at Padua, and Andrea Dandolo at Venice.*—They are generally dictated in disorder and hurry, as if the hand that wrote them was still trembling with the excitement of public life; as if the writer regretted the few moments he consecrated to register the annals of the past, in his anxiety to take his share of the present, or to provide for the future. The sentence they passed on the events which they witnessed,—the opinions they transmitted relative to the character of their contemporaries, are uttered in a tone of deep, almost disdainful conviction, as if they were placed too far above suspicion, to deign to support their assertion by the accumulation of evidence; or to dream of the possibility of their statements being ever questioned by the inquisitiveness of after generations.

But now that Italy had become a prey to domestic and foreign usurpations, and the

* Ricordano Malespini, died, 1281; his History of Florence, published, Florence, 1568.—Dino Compagni's Chronicle extends from 1280—1312.—Giovanni Villani's History of Florence, from its origin to 1348; first edition, Venice, 1537. Matteo, his brother, and Filippo, his brother's son, continued it to 1364.—Andrea Dandolo, born, 1307; Doge of Venice, 1343; died, 1354. His History published by Muratori.

scene of active life being transferred elsewhere, she was left to exercise her dominion over the realms of the mind; historical studies were pursued under the more favourable circumstances of a calm, meditative age; and, associated with politics, they gave rise to that science which was afterwards called by the name of philosophical history.

The historians of the sixteenth century, however, who wrote when religious and civil tyranny had declared its unrelenting war against thought, were soon made aware, that a writer espousing the cause of honour and truth must unite to the powers of genius the heart of a hero, and the devotedness of a martyr.

Some of them were indeed equal to their dangerous task. Whatever their moral characters, or the political bias by which they were actuated, whilst engaged in the debates of public life, such an air of conscientiousness and candour, of calm and dignity, prevails in every page of their writings, as might well give us a more favourable impression of the integrity and morality of their age, than their own descriptions are calculated to suggest.

But the insidious liberality of princely patronage not unfrequently enlisted the writer in the cause of despotism, and the republican annalist was turned into a court historiographer. The

prevailing taste for classical literature, gave elegance of style and purity of language an ascendency over the merit of historical veracity; and that gravity, earnestness, and forbearance, which enchants us in Villani or Dandolo, loses much of its attraction when coming from such bitter partizans as Guicciardini and Nardi, or from such notorious sycophants as Pigna or Giovio.

It is especially as an historian that Machiavello calls forth our sincere admiration.—Machiavello, the stern misanthrope, the warm patriot, writing with a hand still bruised and benumbed by the rack to which the vengeance of Medici had doomed him,—never betrays, by the slightest allusion in his Florentine history, any bitterness of resentment. Wholly engrossed by the importance of his subject; exhibiting all that versatility in abstracting and generalizing ideas, and that sagacious estimate of human nature, by which his discourses on Livy, his life of Castruccio, and his other political works, are distinguished, he shows himself all over the work an apostle of freedom and virtue. Ay, virtue! notwithstanding that tinge of inborn misanthropy, which a long dealing with men, and struggling with evil, had exasperated and deepened.

His friend, the prince of Italian historians,

Guicciardini, is not so utterly exempt from blame. In his youth an ambassador of the Florentine republic; afterwards a stanch partizan of the destroyers of Florentine liberty; a warrior and lieutenant of the papal forces at Parma and Modena, under Leo X. and Clement VII.; an orator of the tyrant Alexander de Medici before Charles V. at Naples; and the main instrument of the exaltation of his successor, Cosmo I.;—Guicciardini, a shrewd politician, a heartless patrician, detested by the people, deluded by the ungrateful tyrant to whom he had given up his country,—while relating events in which he had a large share, in the solitude of his retirement, is always warmly attached to the name of Medici. Still it would be injustice to say that party spirit or disappointment draws him out of the dignity befitting his important ministry; and whenever the interests of his patrons are not immediately at stake, he shows himself a zealous and fearless lover of truth.

Likewise Adriani, Nerli and Nardi, Segni and Varchi, and Scipione Ammirato, either impenitent republicans, dying in the distress and sorrows of exile, or awkward courtiers, preferring the cause of truth to the favour of their lord; sometimes stabbed and mangled by his satellites; sometimes persecuted even in their tombs by

his jealousy, that succeeded in mutilating, and even altogether withdrawing their writings, in some instances defrauding posterity for centuries—all of them may be said to excel in that self-possession which, divesting the related events of all exaggeration or palliative, presents them bare, but striking evidences against the monsters whom they consign to the unerring desecration of posterity.

The Florentine historians have been held in high reputation in consequence of their merit of terseness and elegance of style, and purity of language; though, with the exception of the concise, sententious, ever-powerful Machiavello, they all wrote with that redundance, diffuseness, and pompousness, that characterized the prose writers of the sixteenth century, and which they fondly mistook for eloquence.

But every other town and province of Italy could boast of an equal number of eminent annalists.

Navagero, Bembo, and others, were charged with the care of the history of Venice; while Paruta and Contarini undertook, by able political treatises, to reveal the secret working of the constitution of a state, of which the wisdom and valour, the internal security and prosperity, were, in that age, the objects of the admiration and envy of the civilized world.

Genoa had its annalists, Bonfadio and Foglietta. Ludovico il Moro had, before 1500, selected Corio, a Milanese noble, as the historiographer of his country; whilst Pigna performed equal duties under the patronage of the house of Este. Costanzo, an elegant poet, was busy with his work on Naples; and the grave events which, towards the close of the sixteenth century, had brought the church of Rome to the brink of ruin, engaged the attention of several writers, the precursors of the two historians of the Council of Trent,—Sarpi and Pallavicino.

But the annals of their country were either not sufficient, or too dolorous a subject for the Italians, to be exclusively dwelt upon; and those especially, whom political misfortunes, or spirit of adventure, had driven abroad, illustrated the lands they visited by their historical productions. Hence those works on France by Emili; on Spain by Marineo; on England by Vergilii; and others on more remote countries, who thus opened the field in which Davila and Bentivoglio were soon to be highly distinguished.

Cardinal Bentivoglio, a man of high feelings, though a papal legate, writing an account of the great struggle of the Hollanders for their religious and political emancipation; describing

places he had visited, and events he had witnessed; treading on the battle-field where his brother and nephew had been slain.—Davila, a creature of Catherine de Medici; a courtier; an adventurer, but also an intrepid soldier; giving a full account of the feuds of the Huguenots, and the wars of the League—both shrewd, cool, and diligent observers, as well as warm and eloquent narrators, seemed providentially intended to perform, as it were, the part of arbitrators in a contest in which the interested parties, on either side, were too much blinded by partiality or rancour, to be allowed to plead their own causes before the tribunal of after generations.

But from its primordial rise, history found itself environed by the frowns and threats of prevailing tyranny, and was put to the disheartening ordeal of fire and sword.

Varchi, who, after a long exile, was recalled by the Duke Cosmo de Medici, and invited to write events he had witnessed, doing homage to none but truth,—one dark night, as he returned from court, where, according to his wont, he had read a chapter of his history to his patron, was assailed, and all but mortally wounded, by an unknown assassin. Bonfadio was, by the malignity of powerful enemies, brought to the scaffold, accused of the most

heinous crimes. Sarpi, who relied too far on the protection of his native republic, Venice, whose interests he daringly sustained against the pretensions of the court of Rome, well nigh fell a victim to papal revenge. In full daytime, in the midst of his friends, in a thronged street, he was attacked by four ruffians, whose poniards made acquaintance with the best of his blood.

Both Varchi and Sarpi recovered from their wounds; but their example, and the fate of other votaries of truth, proved fatal to its cause. The strongest spirits began to waver; and, after a short struggle, despair prevailed, and the silence of death.

Such was the sixteenth century—the age of genius—the age of crime!—that sealed the fate of Italy, that gave its utmost development to its powerful mind—the sunset of Italian greatness—the dawn of European civilization.

It would be difficult to point out another age or country in which the human mind displayed so high a degree of activity; in which so many immortal names were crowded together in so short a space of years. Truly, of all that exuberance of mental vigour, a vast deal was miserably wasted in vain and illusory pursuits: of those scientific and literary labours an immense part is irretrievably lost to posterity.

But was any other age—are our own times, quite free from similar aberrations from the ules of sense and taste? Are our phrenology and animal magnetism less deplorable extravagances than the chimerical systems of the pseudo-Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy of bygone centuries?

God suffers us to grope in a chaos of darkness and error, as if to make us aware that He alone is truth; and that in Him alone our longings after truth may be expected to find a lasting repose!

ITALY.

FOURTH PERIOD.—FOREIGN DOMINION.

CHAPTER I.

GALILEO.

Decline and extinction of the Italian reigning families—Spanish oppression—Religious intolerance—Pirates—Banditti—Tommaso Campanella—Masaniello—Attempts against Venice and Genoa—Papal government—Italian heroes abroad, Farnese, Spinola, Strozzi—Marini and the Seicentisti—Chiabrera—Christina of Sweden—Guidi—Filicaia—Faustina Maratti—Sarpi—Galileo and his school—Cassini.

THE crowning of Charles V. at Bologna in 1530, was for Italy the commencement of a new era. That ceremony took place under circumstances ominously unexampled. It was the revival of a spectacle that had not been witnessed in Italy since nearly a century. The golden and iron crowns, reproduced after long oblivion, seemed on the Austrian's head to sparkle with renovated lustre. None of his

predecessors, not excepting even Charlemagne, or Otho the Great, had ever held Italy so firmly and unconditionally in his grasp.

Of all those Italian princes that were lost among the crowd of his imperial retinue at Bologna, there was scarcely any one that had not been his enemy, and yet not one that owed not his estates and his very existence to the emperor's clemency. That same proud pontiff, Clement VII., who laid the diadem on his brow, had been for nine months a prisoner at St. Angelo, utterly, helplessly at his mercy. There was not one among the proudest heads in Italy, that Charles could not, at his pleasure, make a footstool to his throne.

From the first descent of Charles VIII. of France, to the treaties of Bologna, during the space of thirty-six years, the Italian states had in vain attempted to make a stand against the current of foreign invasion. The valour of their combatants, and the wisdom of their politicians; their leagues, intrigues, and conspiracies, had been equally baffled. Their active but discordant endeavours, far from preventing, had only hastened the course of fate.

At Bologna they surrendered at discretion. War had indeed soon broken out afresh between the two irreconcileable rivals of France and Austria. It was continued even after the

death of Francis I. and the abdication of Charles V., by their respective successors, Henry II. and Philip II., down to the peace of Chateau-Cambresis, in 1559. But since 1530, no Italian standard was raised, no mention ever made of the name of Italy. That country was still for that and the following ages, often the field and prize of combat; but, as a nation, it had long since ceased to have any share in the events that decided its doom. A long period of passivity had begun, during which Italy seemed to have entered into a new struggle with her rulers to prove whether their means of oppression or her power of endurance would be sooner exhausted.

For all the rest of the sixteenth and during part of the following century, a period of comparative peace ensued—interrupted only by ephemeral fits of petty ambition on the part of the Italian princes, who were as yet rather forced than schooled to their yoke.

It was not long, however, before their submission was thoroughly accomplished. Unable to throw it off, they endeavoured to appear proud of their state of dependence. They adopted, even to affectation, the manners and style, and the language itself, of foreign courts; they entered into their political views, proffered their services and subsidies, in order

to secure their favour; they purchased from them the sanction of their titles; they courted their alliance by frequent intermarriages, to extend their influence abroad, and strengthen their despotism at home.

Deprived of all intrinsic importance, they strove to outshine each other by their courtly splendour, to the utter exhaustion of their finances; they turned their last remnants of power into an instrument of usurpation; they extinguished the last spirit of republican activity by the lavish gift of aristocratic distinctions; they dried up the sources of the wealth of the country, and prepared their own with the ruin of their people.

The consciousness of the rapid decline of their power, of their progressive annihilation and imbecility, exasperated and perverted their nature, and called forth their most wicked propensities. Always prone to abandon themselves to opposite extremes; enervated by habitual indolence, and yet haunted by the vague longings of a vain-glorious ambition; harassed by the testimony of a troubled conscience; jealous, suspicious, restless; now they buried themselves among the headlong excesses of a riotous debauchery,—now they sued for peace with Heaven by an outward show of bigoted devotion, by a servile submission to the church,

by a ready co-operation with its work of fanaticism and persecution.

Such were the great majority of our national princes in days of foreign bondage; who have rendered the very name of royalty for ever execrable in Italy, by associating it with the memory of the most awful enormities that ever degraded the human race.

Thus, with the exception of the house of Savoy, to which the advantage of its geographical situation, and the valour and policy of its princes, added every day fresh importance, the Italian reigning families had long before the close of the sixteenth century, utterly fallen from their former political influence: the most illustrious of them, after a silent and often ignominious obscurity, as if exhausted with long indulgence in a dissolute life, died of sheer impotence, and became extinct for want of succession.

By the peace of Cambray in 1529, and that of Chateau-Cambresis in 1559, the absolute possession of Italy was adjudged to the Austrian house of Spain. It descended without serious opposition from the Emperor Charles V. to Philip II., and from him to his heirs, Philip III. and IV., and Charles II., whose reigns embraced nearly the whole of the seventeenth century.

During that long interval of death-like tranquillity, the chains that conquest had forged were fastened and riveted. Italy lay under the control of Spain lifeless and mute.

Of all foreign rules with which the wrath of Heaven might have visited that ill-fated country, that of Spain was the most afflictive and cruel. Philip II. and Paul IV. ascended the throne at nearly the same epoch; and, though their indomitable pride brought them into frequent collision, they felt but too soon the necessity of mutual co-operation in the sanguinary war that both waged against civil and religious freedom.

The spirit of catholic intolerance was communicated to Italy by the Spaniards. To the bigoted zeal of that nation, which had been roused and fostered during the last Moorish wars, the Italians are indebted for the institution of the Holy Office and Jesuitism. The gloomy genius of Loyola rekindled a religious ardour which a long period of half-pagan refinement had well-nigh extinguished. At the head of a band of Spanish maniacs, in whom he had infused the zeal and intrepidity of ancient chivalrous spirit, the sainted visionary hurried along the Italian cities, waving the torch of fanaticism. He offered to the reluctant Paul III. his devoted legion. That

priestly militia invaded the schools and colleges, the pulpit and confessional; they usurped the monopoly of the mind, from its earliest development to its last struggles in death. The Jesuits were first installed by the Spanish viceroys in Naples and Sicily, and by the Spanish duchess of Cosmo I., at Florence.

The zeal of the most rigid popes could not satisfy the rabid ferocity of Spain. The ministers of Philip II. were seriously bent on the dethronement of Sixtus V., because that pontiff seemed inclined to receive the recanting Henry of Navarre into the bosom of the church!

Terror and violence equally presided over the civil administration of the lieutenants of Spain. Naples and Milan were exhausted by harassing tributes. The two Sicilies, deprived of their constitutional franchises, rapidly sank from that state of prosperity to which they had been raised by the liberal house of Aragon. The example of Spanish pride, pomp and indolence, engendered among the Castilian nobles by the exorbitant affluence of wealth from their transatlantic colonies, became contagious among the Italian aristocracy. The privileges granted to, or usurped by, the nobility and clergy; the arrogance and misrule of the military; the general disorganization of all social orders, had put an end to the empire

of the law. The Italian nobles, satisfied with the share they were allowed to take in the oppression of the people, surrounded with an extravagant *cortège* of bravos, protected by the inviolability of their persons and dwellings, were sure of unbounded impunity. Society was once more submitted to the right of the strongest. The horrors of the Middle Ages had recommenced in Italy. The annals of the seventeenth century are filled with the details of private feuds, murders and vengeances,—of daring iniquities perpetrated in open defiance of public authority.

But the Spanish government, like all other despotisms, was no less improvident in protecting its Italian subjects from foreign aggression, than it was unable to secure for them the enjoyment of social order. Whilst the galleons of the "Invincible Armada" were routed in the Scheldt or the Channel, the roving pirates of the neighbouring ports of Barbary spread terror and desolation all along our coasts. The bagnios of Algiers and Tunis were crowded with thousands of Italian captives. The terrified labourer was startled from his sleep by the glare of his burning cottage; the shores of Calabria and Sicily were turned into a swampy desert by nearly a century of unremitting warfare.

Meanwhile, swarms of deserters and bandits, the out-casts of a society that afforded the weak no protection, the wronged no redress—wreaked their vengeance on such of its members as fell defenceless into their hands. The Italian brigands, joined in formidable bands of hundreds and thousands; headed sometimes by the young scions of a bankrupt nobility; less feared than admired and favoured by the poor inhabitants of the mountainous districts to whom they proved inoffensive neighbours; secure in their numbers, in their strongholds, in their reckless, desperate bravery, were, for nearly two centuries, the terror of the Roman and Neapolitan governments, against which their wars were principally waged.

The day had even been, when those lawless bandits nearly proved the instruments of national emancipation. A wide-spread conspiracy had been entered into, towards the year 1599, by a great number of Calabrian monks, who enlisted men of the most desperate character, with a view to deliver southern Italy from the Spanish yoke, by a general massacre. At the head of this association—which relied on the co-operation of a Turkish fleet—was a Dominican friar, equally known as a rebellious spirit in the republic of letters—Tommaso Campanella.

He was one of those vast, mighty, and yet partly diseased geniuses, endowed by Providence with a degree of energy which would seem redundant and dangerous in more peaceful and enlightened ages, but which could alone have made them equal to the mission of strife and peril for which they were intended. Campanella was one of the boldest champions of Telesian philosophy,—one of the stanchest supporters of the Copernican system. With a mind that could not rest satisfied with the most luminous results of science, he launched into the boundless space of mystical inquiry. To a profound erudition, and an acute and versatile understanding, he added an inextinguishable thirst for what was then called forbidden knowledge, and made himself an adept in the arcana of astrology and magic. Like many of his predecessors, he was accused of entertaining hostile opinions not only against the doctrines of the church, but against Christianity itself. He was known among his enemies by the appellation of Cardan's ape.

Involved in the calamities of the Calabrian conspiracy, he underwent the most severe ordeal that the ingenuity of the Spanish torture could contrive. Finally, after six and twenty years of severe confinement, released by the intercession of Pope Urban VIII., he

repaired to his court, whence—the prisons of the Roman Inquisition being not a sufficiently safe harbour against Spanish vengeance—he again removed to Paris. He died in a convent of that city, honoured and cherished by Louis XIII. and Richelieu.*

Humbled and crushed by the rigorous measures of the combative pope, Sixtus V., from 1585 to 1590, the Italian bandits returned to the charge with redoubled forces under his pusillanimous successors. The wide waste that lies between Rome and Naples continued to be the theatre of their inroads, until their final extermination by the lieutenants of Napoleon.

There are now no more Italian bandits. The love of the marvellous so common among foreign tourists, may still, perhaps, dignify a gang of paltry beggars or sneaking foot-pads into a legion of high-bred brigands. But the few robbers which are now occasionally to be met with on the Italian highways, are no more to be compared to the spirited Knights of St. Nicholas, who once ranged themselves under the standard of Alphonso Piccolomini or Marco Sciarra, than the jackal of the marshes to the wolf of the Apennines.

* Tommaso Campanella, born at Stilo, 1568 ; a Dominican, 1582 ; arrested and tortured at Naples, 1599 ; liberated, 1626 ; left Rome for France, 1634 ; died in Paris, 1639.

The race of the Italian bandits is extinct. The few remnants of those bold and generous freebooters that had escaped the ravages of their French destroyers, either fell into the snares of papal perfidy, and were summarily immolated, or were gradually tamed and subdued by the long continuance of peace. The population of the Apennines, thinned by war, penury, and emigration, seemed to share in that state of languor and apathy that characterizes the lowest classes all over the country. They are still at war with their governments; they still consider contraband and brigandage as a lawful means of reprisals against duties and taxes, about the imposition of which they were never consulted; they pride themselves in their evasion, or even open violation of vexatious laws, which no social compact ever sanctioned; they consider themselves entitled to protest and rebel against a government which they were never called to acknowledge; and when sufficiently strong, they avail themselves of their right to declare war against it, against its abettors and dependents, against all that rely on its protection. But they seldom act in accordance with these rather wide notions of right and wrong. The governments of the present day are careful not to urge them to the last extremities. The yoke is never made to

weigh hard upon them. The Apennines are still the abode of a wild independence; and the veteran of the highway has hung his blunderbuss over the mantel-piece, and rests, like an old campaigner, under the shade of his laurels, astonishing and edifying the rising generation by the recital of his former exploits.

Were it otherwise,—were the armed bands of the Apennines once more to pour down on the plain, the sympathies of the uneducated classes would be still in their favour. The subjects of absolute governments view such deeds of violence under a different aspect. Their hatred against their rulers admits of no discrimination. Whoever dares to throw his gauntlet to the established authorities, be it even the smuggler of the mountains, or the bandit of the woods, is sure to be their natural friend. Whoever breaks through the trammels of their odious laws, is with them a hero; if he is hung in the attempt, a martyr.

But it was not only among the lawless rovers of the Apennines, that the Spanish government met with obstinate opposition. The Milanese and Neapolitan insurrections, by which Charles V. and Philip II. were, as we have mentioned, baffled in their attempts to establish the Spanish Inquisition in 1547 and 1563, were not

the last occurrences of popular reaction against the all-powerful oppression of their successors. The unwarlike population of Naples and Palermo, roused by unbearable depredations to the courage of despair, led by the stormy eloquence of untutored demagogues, arose *en masse* against the avaricious ministers of Philip IV. The revolutions of Masaniello at Naples, and Giuseppe Alessi at Palermo, in 1647, and another at Messina, thirty years later, seemed to announce the downfal of the Spanish dominion in Italy.

The fleets and squadrons sent against the revolted cities were repeatedly routed, and the monarch's lieutenants condescended to negotiate with the rebels.

The times, meanwhile, seemed highly favourable to the vindication of popular rights. The Netherlands were just reaping the first fruits of their dearly asserted independence. England was constituted into a free commonwealth, and Charles I., confined at Hampton-court, was awaiting his doom. Everywhere in Germany religious dissensions led the way to political enfranchisement.

Unfortunately, the upper classes in Italy did not, as in the north, espouse the popular cause. The multitude, abandoned to themselves, cajoled by the artful viceroys, deceived by their

leaders, betrayed also by France, whose policy it already was to foment or allay Italian discontent, according as it suited its views—after an immense waste of blood, were finally brought back to their allegiance.

Whilst the largest Italian provinces were thus perishing under the immediate oppression of Spain, and the smaller states were compelled to follow its policy, the Republics of Venice and Genoa were kept in a state of constant apprehension from its designing ambition.

Already, in 1548, and again in 1571, the Spanish fleets of Charles V. and Philip II., had repeatedly threatened Genoa, thus requiting the signal services of Andrea Doria to the house of Austria by the demolition of those free institutions by which that patriotic hero had secured the prosperity of his country.

Foiled in their attempts against Genoa, either by the watchfulness of the senate, or by the interference of Rome, the Spanish viceroys turned their endeavours against Venice. The ample possessions of that maritime state on the mainland, and its thriving commerce in the East, were looked upon with rancour and jealousy. The Venetians had also given offence by their alliance with the Protestants of Holland and Germany. They had been the first to acknowledge Henry IV. of France, and to

negotiate his reconciliation with the Roman see. Political interests and religious fanaticism equally contributed to render that state an object of the aversion of Spain.

The Dukes of Ossuna and Toledo, viceroys of Philip III. at Milan and Naples, resolved to rid their provinces of the dangerous vicinity of an independent republic. Their accomplice, the Marquis Bedmar—the Spanish ambassador at Venice, hired a band of foreign cut-throats, who were to facilitate the invasion of the Spaniards by the massacre of the doge and senate, and by the conflagation of the city.

The final day had risen for Venice. But the vile instruments to whom that deed of iniquity was committed, could be satisfied with nothing less than a double treason. The senate, put on its guard by a timely warning, only delayed its vengeance till it was enabled to obtain it full and mature.*

But the frequent recurrence of Turkish hostilities, the ruinous wars of the Morea and Candia,† in which, after its wonted prodigies of valour, the lion of St. Mark was, in the end,

* Conspiracy of the Marquis of Bedmar against Venice; Jacques Pierre, Jaffier, and one hundred and sixty conspirators, executed, 1618.

† War of Candia, 1645—1669. Conquest of the Morea by the Venetians, 1682—1699. The Venetians driven from the Morea, 1714—1718.

obliged to give way before the prevailing fortune of the crescent, allowed Venice no leisure to fight out its quarrels with Spain. It was then, that, threatened in the very heart of its empire by powers who did not scruple to add such deeds of perfidy to their widely superior forces, the Venetian government was compelled to entrench itself behind that screen of terror and mystery,—to seek its safety in that system of suspicion and espionage,—of secret, sudden, appalling executions, which have wrapped in gloom the sunset of Venice. The senate felt that they were treading on the brink of a yawning abyss; they were governed by terror, and governed by terror.

Of all Italian potentates Rome alone could still be considered independent of Spain. The papal government had already felt the utter helplessness of its political and military situation during the sack of Rome by the lieutenants of Charles V. in 1527. But the successors of Clement VII. had found a powerful advocate in the bigotry of Philip II., and of the fanatic nation over whose destinies that monarch presided.

Even when the Duke of Alva, with the greatest reluctance, received orders to march his Spanish battalions to chastise the arrogance of Paul IV. in 1556, he obtained no better re-

sult from his easy victories, than to be admitted to kiss the foot of the vanquished pontiff, and accept for himself and his master such conditions as it pleased the haughty Caraffa to dictate. Since that time the efforts of both powers were exclusively directed to the extirpation of heresy; and for the furtherance of this interest, the popes might implicitly rely on the friendship and alliance of the catholic kings and feel sure of its reverence and submission; the only subject of discrepancy between them invariably arising from ill-grounded apprehensions on the part of Spain, lest the pope might relax from his vigour so far as to allow the rebels of Flanders to take breath, or to grant his absolution to a repentant Huguenot.

Alas! both Rome and Spain were but too earnest in their deplorable competition; and, although their efforts for a counter-reformation were only partially successful in France and Germany, and were wholly vain in Flanders and England, they did not fail in Italy to extinguish, together with the germs of Protestantism, also the last remnants of personal freedom and energy, and to paralyze the last efforts of intellectual activity.

The warm controversies, to which the springing up of so many new doctrines had given rise, had finally roused the Italians from their reli-

gious indifference. It had determined the conviction of the waverer, and rekindled the zeal of the believer. It had made the clergy aware of the necessity of counteracting the protestant by a catholic reform.

The long and stormy sessions of the Council of Trent, which had so far contributed to widen the breach between the two contending factions, to strengthen papal despotism, to sanction by their authority those very articles of belief that had proved most obnoxious to the reformers, to encourage the animosity of narrow-minded zealots, had, however, operated a salutary revolution.

It marked the epoch of a new era of catholicism. It led to the institution of new religious orders,—to the restoration of a rigid discipline among the clergy: it deterred the Roman prelates at least from an open indulgence in their luxurious propensities: it compelled vice to hide its infamies from the public gaze.

The popes themselves, now struggling for their very existence, all engrossed by the pious cares of their anti-heretic crusade, began to remit from their worldly ambition. Paul III. and IV. gave the last examples of that scandalous *nepotism* which had been the besetting sin of papacy from its primordial rise: the first by investing his natural son, Pier Luigi

Farnese, with the sovereignty of Parma; the second by bestowing on the Caraffa, his nephew, the fiefs which he had usurped from the Colonna. Pius V. put an end to similar grants by his bull, dated 1567, prohibiting any further infeudation of church property. Since that time, the relations of a pope might still, indeed, have great ascendency over the administration of his government,—might even influence the election of his successor; but the lasting evils resulting from the hereditary ambition of a Riario or Borgia, could never return.

But the subjects of the Roman see had no great reason to congratulate themselves on the independence of their sovereign, or on the paramount importance that he attached to his spiritual interests.

From its earliest instalment to the present age, the administration of the papal dominions has been signalized for its want of foresight, compactness, and uniformity. The decrepitude and infirmities of the chief of the state; the frequent recurrence of interregnums and re-elections, an illiberal spirit of contradiction so strangely contrasting with the dogma of infallibility; the confusion of spiritual and temporal powers, invariably involved the Roman Curia in a chaos of misrule and inconsistency.

But in the period to which we allude, Rome

had little or no leisure to attend to the worldly welfare of her subjects. The catholic world was in a state of open warfare; and the provinces belonging to the head of the church, were laid rather under a military, than a theocratic rule. Bologna, Ferrara, Rimini, and Ancona, all the towns of Romagna, were forcibly deprived even of the last shadow of their municipal constitutions, to be submitted to the arbitrament of a legate and the Inquisition;—the Roman states were drained to their last resources to subsidize the champions of the church in France and the Netherlands, or to hire the poniards of a Jacques Clement or Ravaillac. Famine and pestilence, piracy and brigandage, devoured the victims of papal improvidence. Sixty thousand persons were swept off in one summer, in the metropolis alone, by the scourge of 1590.

All ideas of justice, faith, and humanity, were subverted by bulls that sanctioned rebellion and regicide; by the thanksgivings offered up to Heaven in all catholic churches, at the first intelligence of the day of the barricades, or Saint Bartholomew's eve.

Under such ominous influence the era of foreign bondage was announced in Italy; and if we reflect how many long-lasting irreparable calamities befel that county at once; if we dwell

on every page of the blood-stained annals of the Spanish dominion, and enumerate all the religious and civil causes of demoralization—far from being surprised at the state of corruption and debasement in which the Italians have fallen, we shall only have reason to wonder how that people can still preserve the outward forms, at least of general civilization and culture, and how indeed they still bear the very aspect and semblance of men.

Yet the fallen race still clung to its former greatness with all the strength of southern vitality.

Subdued, as they were, by the force of arms, they seemed yet unwilling to yield to their foreign conquerors the glory of military supremacy. During all the period of the civil struggles of Flanders and the thirty years' war, Italy gave, not unfrequently, the steadiest combatants, always the ablest leaders. Spain had no greater generals than Emmanuel Philibert of Savoy, or Alexander Farnese, the third Duke of Parma; and the mildness and moderation of the two Italian heroes admirably contrasted with the Teutonic obstinacy of Don Juan of Austria, and the blood-thirsty intolerance of the Duke of Alva.

The maritime valour of Genoa had not expired with Andrea Doria. Frederic Spinola

was still, from 1598 to 1603, the greatest admiral of Philip II.; whilst Ambrogio, his eldest brother, wasted the immense fortune of his house to levy a legion of 10,000 Lombards, at the head of whom he repeatedly restored the vacillating fortunes of Spain. Farnese and Spinola were the only warriors that Henry IV. and Maurice of Nassau consented to acknowledge their rivals; and the Lombard legions, which they led to victory, gave such examples of valour, fidelity, and discipline, as the Italians seldom displayed in the defence of a better cause. Whilst these warriors were lavish of their blood in the service of the oppressors of their country, the descendants of Italian exiles reaped equal laurels in France. The two sons of Filippo Strozzi, in the vain hope of being enabled to avenge their father's doom, enlisted in the ranks of the enemies of their country's enemy. Leo Strozzi, the younger, admiral of France, was the worthy competitor of Andrea Doria. Piero, his eldest brother, an ardent, enterprising, but unfortunate adventurer, and his son Filippo, one of the greatest generals of his age, were successively raised to the supreme command of the French armies. The three Strozzi all fell young in battle, but not before leaving such testimonials of their valour and genius, as might secure their name

against oblivion. San Piero also, the fierce and daring Corsican rebel, and his son, and grandson, the Ornano, both marshals of France, may, perhaps, be numbered among the Italian warriors; since San Piero himself learned the art of war under Giovanni de Medici, the famous leader of the Bande Nere; since they were, during all their lifetime, envied and hated as foreigners at the French court; and, in short, since the fashion of adopting a Napoleon, or disavowing a Fieschi, according as it suited their vanity, had not yet arisen in France.

There ensued a constant emigration of Italian volunteers to Spain, to France, and Germany; increasing in proportion as the great mass of the nation sank into enervation and indolence. The age of Eugene and Montecuccoli succeeded to that of Farnese and Spinola. A vague spirit of military adventure lingered still in the heart of some of the nobility; nor was it yet utterly extinguished at the epoch of the last European convulsions, when our young conscripts were called to join the standards of Beauharnais or Murat: it cost their leaders no great trouble to teach the Italians how to turn their face to the enemy.

I have insisted, perhaps, too long on this point, because there have been recent facts—

such as the insurrections of 1820, or the naval expedition of Tripoli, which, rather uncharitably and undiscerningly judged of from the event, have reflected on the military character of the Neapolitans, if not of all the Italians—a disgrace, to which that people, proud as they may have some reason to be, of the laurels they reaped during the Napoleonian campaigns, are not much inclined to submit.

It certainly appears very strange that, in our age, when recent examples have demonstrated how the best soldiers could be made out of the most effeminate people, out of the vilest recruits; when every political sign seems to point to the establishment of universal peace, and martial prowess is likely to become a quality of the least consequence,—so much stress should be laid on the aptitude of any nation for war, and the Italians, or Neapolitans, should be so undistinguishably stigmatized as an unwarlike and dastardly race.

But our task will probably again give us opportunity to return to this painful subject. Be it sufficient to have stated for the present, that, in the days of Strozzi and Spinola, Italy had not yet altogether laid aside the sword, though Heaven knows it was only:

"Per servir sempre o vincitrice o vinta."

As in the battle-field the slaves had not yet given up the supreme command, so neither had they entirely abandoned their claims to their intellectual ascendency. The impulse given to men's minds by previous ages, could only gradually abate. Indeed, the Italians were no more aware of their rapid decline, than the patient is, who has received a paralyzing stroke.

They were bred up with the fond illusions of their fathers, that theirs was the soil where genius grows wild, the land of laurel and myrtle, the birthplace of poetry and art. They could hardly believe that the sacred fire of inspiration had migrated beyond the Alps, to warm the fancy of an English dramatist, or a Dutch painter; that genius could breathe in a climate where there springs no vine.

Their schools and academies still flourished: their poets and artists were more numerous than ever. All was still to be found in their verses and paintings that a lively imagery, a melodious language, a luxurious colouring, could afford.

But the energy and manliness of conception, the nerve and conciseness of diction, the boldness and rapidity of execution, had ceased with the consciousness of dignity and security which the enjoyment of civil freedom had engendered.

Deprived of the genuine sources of inspiration, poets and artists made up for their want of true feeling, by affectation and effort; by a spurious refinement; by over-wrought figures and far-fetched contrast; by those false conceits, in fine, which characterized the schools of Guido and Marini.

They acted like a man exhausted by long indulgence in dissolute habits, who has recourse to those very liquors which unmanned him, as if with a hope that alcohol could perform the functions of blood.

We have already noticed that the germs of this false lustre, of this emasculate morbidness, are to be discovered in the poetry of Tasso and Guarini. But they were soon to receive full development under the influence of that great corrupter of the national taste, the first of the *Seicentisti*—Giambattista Marini.

Marini was contemporary with Tasso, and was even brought into contact with him at the house of Manso in Naples. One of his earliest patrons was that Cardinal Aldobrandino who is said to have received the last breath of Torquato. This prelate introduced Marini to the court of Charles Emmanuel of Savoy. Marini was a man of a frank and generous disposition. The rivalry of an ignoble adversary, who had recourse to assassination and calumny to drive

him from Turin, obliged him to take shelter in France, where he met with the most flattering reception from Mary de Medici. Later in life, love of country induced him to accept an invitation of Pope Gregory XV. His reception at Rome and Naples was little short of a royal triumph. Public enthusiasm pointed to him as the greatest poet of his age.*

Marini was undoubtedly a poet. Indeed, his fault rather consisted in the abuse, than in any defect of poetical faculties. He suffered his reason to be overcome by a vague love of novelty: he abandoned himself to the exuberance of his fancy; and that false glare had equally the power to fascinate the judgment of his contemporaries at home and abroad.

But Marini's faults were partly atoned for by redeeming qualities. His verses were not unfrequently free from that corruption to which he was, justly or unjustly, accused of leading the way. Not a few of the stanzas of his "Adone" are still to be numbered among the finest specimens of Italian versification. But his imitators, whose talent merely consisted in a blind exaggeration of his defects, sank deeper

* Giambattista Marini, born at Naples, 1569; died at Naples, 1625. "L' Adone," Paris, 1621. "La Murtoleide," Venice, 1626. "La Strage degl' Innocenti," Venice, 1626, etc.

and deeper into exaggeration and bombast, until the soundest principles of taste were subverted.

An equal degeneration was discernible in every province of literature. Sacred eloquence, which, in that age of religious fervour, might be expected to have soared so high, which gave rise in France to such geniuses as Bourdaloue or Bossuet, was contaminated with the same corrupting poison. With the exception, perhaps, of Segneri, there was not one among the Italian preachers that did not derive his sources of religious emotion from the inflated style of the Seicentisti. That same tinselled lustre shines forth, likewise, throughout every page of the otherwise eloquent jesuit, Bartoli, the herald of the heroic exploits of the missionaries of his order.

Thus was the *Seicento* first ushered into Italy.

But among those few, whom either a real soundness of mind, or, perhaps, a natural reluctance to follow in the footsteps of others, providentially preserved from prevailing contagion, we find names that live still honoured and revered in the memory of after generations.

The veneration of Italy for the name of Torquato seemed to deter the writers of the following century from attempting epic poetry. The

"Adone" of Marini, a poem which exceeded in length the "Orlando" of Ariosto, was rather a mythological tale than an epopée, and the few other works in the heroic style which appeared in that age, can scarcely be said to have ever existed.

But a more lasting fame has been attached to a new style of composition, in which Tassóni, Lippi, and Bracciolini, especially excelled—the heroi-comic poetry.

Of this kind of poetry I confess myself a most incompetent judge. Poetry, painting, and music, have, in my opinion, a nobler mission on earth than to minister to our mirth: and they are never prostituted to that exclusive object, without derogating from their natural dignity. Ariosto and Berni had, already, in their chivalrous poems, indulged their comic vein, as far, perhaps, as might be safely attempted, and not without detriment to the general interest of their works. But in the "Secchia Rapita," in the "Scherno degli Dei," and "Malmantile Riacquistato," we would look in vain for the bold sallies of Ariosto's playful fancy, or for the *naïve* graces of Berni's spontaneous humour. Farcical vulgarity, and puerile trivialness, have taken the place of genuine *vis comica*. We may sometimes be taken by surprise, and laugh in spite of ourselves, but a

feeling of disgust and self-reproach is sure to attend that moment of involuntary hilarity.*

And yet those poems, especially the "Rape of the Bucket," enjoy still a wide popularity; and Tassoni owes to that work a celebrity which he better deserved by his bold aversion to Spanish oppression,—by his critical works, which so powerfully contributed to emancipate his contemporaries from their superstitious reverence for antiquity, and to put an end to their idolatry for Petrarch.

The satires of the cold but argute Menzini, and, more so, those of Salvator Rosa,—the first framed after the model of Horace; the latter displaying true original talent, might better deserve our attention. Salvator Rosa, whose boldness of genius, and frankness and wildness of character, rather raised him to the level of the artists of Michael Angelo's age, than of his effeminate contemporaries, was, for his vehemence and vigour as a satirical poet, second to none but Ariosto.

Still lyrical poetry was the style in which the seventeenth century chiefly excelled; and that branch of literature was brought to a degree of elevation unprecedented in Italy. Indeed, with the exception of the amorous style of Petrarch,

* Alessandro Tassoni, born at Modena, 1563; died, 1635. "La Secchia Rapita," 1622.

—which a natural reaction against the sameness and servility of the previous age, and the efforts of Tassoni and other critics, vigorously strove to proscribe—it may be asserted that the ode arose in Italy in the age of Marini. It was the last style of classical composition that the Italians revived in their imitations.

The first of Pindaric and Anacreontic poets was Gabriello Chiabrera, a native of Savona,—a man who entertained no slight opinion of his own abilities; and who said he would, like his countryman, Columbus, "discover new worlds, or perish in the attempt." His glory as an inventor chiefly consisted, however, in forcing the Italian language into all the trammels of Greek versification. The form, rather than the substance, of his poetry, was new. His lyrical enthusiasm seems to be frozen all over by his adherence to his Greek models; and, notwithstanding his vast collection of poems in every style, Chiabrera is very likely to meet soon with the fate of more venturous than fortunate navigators.*

But higher claims to the merit of Pindaric inspiration, may be brought forward by two poets that flourished later in the seventeenth century,—Guidi and Filicaia.†

* Gabriello Chiabrera, born, 1552; died, 1637. Complete edition of his works, 4 vols., octavo, Venice, 1731.

† Alessandro Guidi, born, 1650; died, 1712. "Poesie

There lived then in Rome a lady, who had come from the remotest regions of the north, preceded by the reputation of a saint and a heroine; who had abdicated the throne, and abjured the faith of her great father, for the sake of the sun, of the processions and carnivals of fair Italy; who called around her a crowd of Jesuits and prelates, of artists and literati; who lavished her gold to recommend her soul to priests, her fame to poets.

Her strange dress; her wild sallies of passion; her harsh, despotic temper; and, above all, the cruel treatment of her Italian favourite, had, indeed, partly broken the charm attached to her name, since she first threw herself at the feet of Alexander VII., in 1555, and hung up her sceptre and crown on the sanctuary of Loretto.

Still, men of talent continued to gather around a patroness whose collection of medals and statues,—whose galleries and libraries, gave ample proofs of liberality and taste—though we might, perhaps, be permitted to opine that the air of Italy had not yet quite freed her from the last remnants of Scandinavian barbarism, if we were to believe, with her biographers,

Liriche," Parma, 1681. "L' Endimione," Rome, 1692.—Vincenzo da Filicaia, born at Florence, 1642; died, 1707. "Poesie Toscane," Florence, 1706.

"that she clipped two of the finest paintings of Titian, which she had purchased at an extravagant price, in order to fit them to the panels of her gallery."

At any rate Christina showed more discernment in her estimate of poetical worth. She was one of the first to declare against the bad style of the school of Marini; and, in 1680, she founded an academy, the avowed object of which was, to put an end to the absurdities of the Seicentisti, and which, soon afterwards, in 1690, gave rise to the Arcadia.

Among the most active instruments of that important reform, there was Christina's greatest friend, a young prelate from Pavia, by name, Alessandro Guidi, in whose "Endymion" the queen herself deigned to insert a few of her verses.

Guidi had the name of the greatest lyrist in Italy. The flow, warmth and harmony of his style, its grandeur and majesty; the ease and spontaneousness of his free measure, gave his poesy a loftiness which dreads no comparison—only Guidi wanted a subject worthy of his genius; and we have often occasion to regret, that, after having abandoned ourselves to the charm of that high-flowing grandiloquence, we fall, as if from the clouds, at the announcement of the hero or even heroine of the poem.

But what was wanting in Guidi, is amply found in the works of Filicaia. This poet, almost the only one in the seventeenth century who wrote under the immediate impulse of genuine feeling, and drew inspiration from the importance of his theme, was first aroused from silence by a startling event which threatened Europe with imminent ruin;—the siege of Vienna by the Turks, in 1683. He was not long afterwards more painfully affected by the first ravages of the wars for the succession of Spain, at the opening of the eighteenth century.

The religious and patriotic soul of Filicaia, embodied in a plain, true, but highly impressive language, had power to recall his age from ebriety and delirium. His verses are the only composition of the seventeenth century still living, and sure to live eternally in the hearts of the Italians.

Whilst Chiabrera attempted to revive that Pindaric style which Guidi and Filicaia afterwards emulated, another poet, endowed with a more gentle genius, Fulvio Testi, of Modena, gave us a very able imitation of the chaste and nitid manner of Horace.

This noble and unfortunate bard was born at Ferrara, shortly before the illegitimate heir of Alphonso II. was driven from the throne of his

ancestors, and had followed with his parents the fortunes of Este at Modena. The reigning duke was then Francis I., a warlike prince, who, during the wars for the succession of Mantua, by turns espoused the party of Spain or France, and by his valour caused the fortune of either power to prevail. He governed with a strong and steady hand, and his small states enjoyed under his sway a high degree of prosperity. But the court of Este was still that same slippery ground that had already proved so fatal to Tasso and Guarini. Harassed during all his lifetime by a perpetual alternation of smiles and frowns, Testi was finally imprisoned in 1646, and almost immediately perished in his dungeon. His fate was involved in a dark veil of mystery which no human ingenuity has yet been able to tear asunder.*

The most plausible version is, that one of his odes gave offence to a great personage, whose influence with the duke caused the poet's imprudence to be visited with so awful a punishment. That too famous ode, "Ruscelletto Orgoglioso," and a few others in the same style, are distinguished by a purity, and, at the same time, a vigour of diction, which might well belong to a happier age of Italian literature.

* Fulvio Testi, born, 1593; died, 1646. "Rime," Venice, 1613.

Meanwhile, the poetry of Guidi and Filicaia, the efforts of the academy of Christina of Sweden, and the institution of the Roman Arcadia, of which both those illustrious poets were members, and which soon spread its colonies all over the country, had finally put an end to the hyperbolical style of the Seicentisti, and given a new direction to the public taste.

It brought into light a new school of poetry, which flourished towards the close of the seventeenth and part of the following century; and which, although less liable to the charge of vicious exuberance and intemperance, soon became almost as contemptible for its languor, affectation, and effeminacy. This is the poetry of the Arcadians, of which Zappi was the first master, and which ended with Metastasio.

The sonnets of Zappi, exquisite, even to lusciousness, are read not without admiration even in our days; but we would rather give preference to some of his wife's—the high-minded Faustina. This lady was born of Carlo Maratti, one of the best painters of the Roman school, who was loaded with honours by Pope Clement XI. and Louis XIV. It was from the hands of Clement himself, that his *protégé* Zappi, an advocate from Bologna, received his

accomplished bride.* Faustina, left alone and unprotected, by the loss of her father and husband, found herself an object of that fervent homage which beauty and talent united never failed to excite. Among her *patiti,* we are told, there was an unprincipled Roman baron, who suffered his admiration to give place to passions of a more dangerous nature. Wounded by Faustina's repulses, he had recourse to such a scheme of unmanly vengeance as only a fiend could suggest. In the midst of a brilliant circle of Roman beauties, of which Faustina was the best ornament, he threw the contents of a vial, full of nitric acid and gunpowder, at her face. Her guardian angel, however—pretty women always have one—screened her with his wings, so that, of that Stygian water, only one drop was suffered to fall on her left cheek, leaving a dark spot above the upper lip—a slight mole which, contrasted with the unmatched whiteness of her complexion, enhanced the charms of that beauty which the felon flattered himself to have blighted for ever.

To the infamy of that age be it said, so villanous an attempt was left unpunished: but

* Giambattista Felice Zappi, born, 1667; died, 1719. "Poesie di Felice Zappi e Faustina Maratti." Venice, 1770. —Carlo Maratti, born, 1625; died, 1713.

Faustina did not fail to transmit to posterity the record of her grievances; though, whether through generosity, or apprehension that her verses might consign to immortality her vile aggressor, she refused to mention his name.

These were the writers of the seventeenth century; and if we reflect that the times of Philip II. were likewise the age of Elizabeth, and that the reigns of his successors correspond with those of Louis XIII. and XIV.; if we compare those few half obliterated names with Shakespere and Milton, Corneille and Moliere, Lope and Calderon; or even if we bring the painters of the schools of Carlo Dolci or Guercino, to the level of Rubens or Rembrandt—we shall be amazed at the change that scarcely a century had operated in Italy; and however unwilling to attribute to political causes too great an ascendency over art and literature, we shall only state the fact, that the downfal of all eminence of genius in Italy, dates from the very dawn of the fatal era of Spanish oppression.

But the seventeenth century arose under the auspices of Galileo. The decline and corruption of poetry and the fine arts were coeval with the promotion of the interests of science, and partly attributable to it. The advancement of experimental philosophy gradually

diminished the veneration of the Italians for the works of antiquity. Active minds rushed into the new field so widely spread open before them, with all the eagerness of an enterprising age. Compared with the results of scientific discovery, the mere charms of style appeared languid and idle; the talents of the poet and artist were looked upon as feminine accomplishments. Exornative literature yielded to positive knowledge; form to matter.

Though flourishing nearly at the same age, Tasso and Galileo marked the confines of two distinct periods. Tasso was the last of poets; Galileo the first of philosophers.

We left Galileo, it will be remembered, a professor of mathematics at Pisa, at war with the Aristotelian philosophers, and enjoying the patronage of the house of Medici. He had been appointed, by the special favour of Ferdinand, the third Grand Duke of Tuscany, the only one of the numerous offspring of Cosmo I. who had not perished a victim to the domestic tragedies by which the reign of that tyrant was ominously signalized. Ferdinand had abandoned the sanguinary policy of his father and brother, and strove to revive the glories of republican Tuscany. He removed the last remnants of the Pisan marine to Leghorn, till then only an obscure borough, which owed

him its commerce, its franchises, its very existence. He mustered the knights of St. Stephen into a military body, and appointed them to the command of his galleys, which were then not unsuccessfully cruising in the Levant.

Strange, that these maritime enterprises should interfere with Galileo's tranquillity!—Persecuted by the malignity of Don Giovanni de Medici, a bastard brother of the duke, on account of his disapprobation of the plan that that prince had laid out for clearing the harbour of Leghorn, the philosopher was obliged to remove to Padua, where he professed mathematics from 1592 to 1609, under the protection of the Republic of Venice.

Venice had not yet been compelled, by the treacherous attacks of Spain, to have recourse to those measures of pusillanimous policy, so unworthy of its primeval institutions. As yet, secure and respected, it had, ever since its last Turkish expeditions in 1573, enjoyed a long period of thriving peace. Arts and letters flourished by the side of trade and industry: the spirit of independence revived together with the consciousness of strength and security. Venice was still the shelter of the persecuted and vanquished—the England of other days.

But the senate had, towards that epoch, endangered its tranquillity by its *demelées* with Rome. To this power Venice had given some pretext of complaint by its diplomatic negotiations with the protestants of France, Holland and Germany, among whom it sought its natural allies against the overwhelming ascendency of Spain.

These, and other ill-concealed germs of mutual rancour, burst forth into open hostilities, under Paul V., in 1606, in consequence of the contest of ecclesiastical immunities. During that momentous debate,—the obvious result of which might have led to a total emancipation of Venice from the catholic bondage, without the apathy of the protestant powers, the imbecility of James I. of England, and the pacific interposition of Henry IV. of France,—the Republic had found a valiant champion in the person of its consultor of state, the great historian of the Council of Trent—Fra Paolo Sarpi. Sarpi, whose unswerving, though inoffensive mind, had already rendered him obnoxious to Rome, felt for his native country, besides the natural attachment of every Venetian for the name of St. Mark, a personal gratitude for the protection that the Republic afforded to freedom of inquiry. Aware of the influence that his superior abilities might have

on the fate of his country, he devoted himself to its cause, and entered the lists against the great propugner of papal authority—Cardinal Bellarmine.* He supported the rights of the senate to an unlimited, inalienable jurisdiction in temporal matters, with a zeal to which, as we have seen, he nearly fell a victim. The differences between Venice and Rome being brought to a close, and Sarpi having recovered from the consequences of the aggression of the pope's emissaries, he withdrew to the silence of his cloister, with his characteristic modesty, and gave himself up to his historical work, and to those scientific pursuits, in which he obtained an ample share in the glory of the optical and physiological discoveries of his two friends, Della Porta and Acquapendente.

In the service of such a government, and in the intercourse of such men, seventeen years of Galileo's life were spent; nor could he look back to any other period of his agitated life with a more unmingled satisfaction. In an evil hour for him, Cosmo II., successor of Ferdinand of Tuscany, was moved by his fame to invite him to return; and the love of his native place persuaded the philosopher to abandon a refuge which could best protect him in Italy

* Roberto Bellarmino, born in Tuscany, 1542; a cardinal, 1599; died, 1621.

against the storms that were gathering around his head. The telescope that Galileo left at his departure, as a memento to the senate, together with the "style of the Roman Curia," which the assassin of Sarpi had left in the wound, were preserved as precious relics as long as the glory of Venice endured.

Settled at Florence, Galileo directed towards the heavens that instrument, which, were he even to yield the glory of its invention to Giambattista della Porta, or to some obscure Dutch artificer, he was certainly the first to turn to any important purpose.

What wonders the heavens revealed to the newly-armed eye of the great observer, need not be here related. From 1610 to 1615, since the first publication of his "Intelligence from the Stars," the world was kept in suspense by the enigmas to which he had recourse in order to prevent the encroachments of his rivals, and which he solved by those Latin verses:

"Altissimam planetam tergeminam observavi."
"Cynthiæ figuras æmulatur Mater Amorum"—

each of which seemed to widen the firmament, and bring man one step nearer to his Creator.

Meanwhile, the war of prejudice and superstition commenced. Every one of his new publications called forth endless controversies. Many of the Aristotelian sectarians resisted his

warmest entreaties to look through his telescope; others contended that they could see nothing through it; and some of the most ingenuous, whilst admitting the visibility of the new phenomena, attributed them to diabolical illusions, and brought forward their arguments to deny their existence. At last the Dominican Caccini came to an open declaration of hostilities, by exclaiming from the pulpit, at Florence, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here looking into heaven?"

Galileo hastened to gather the gauntlet. He desired nothing so ardently as to grapple with ignorance; to attack it even within the stronghold of the sanctuary. He knew the age was mature. Concealing an impatient, indomitable temper under the appearance of cheerful, insinuating manners, he had secured the personal friendship of powerful personages, and felt strong in his immense popularity.

But he knew as well that his was to be a war of address rather than open force. The recent fate of Giordano Bruno stood glaring before his eyes. Cosmo II. was indeed his stanch supporter; but Galileo knew better than to rely on the favour of a Medici. Had not another Cosmo given up his best friend, Carnesecchi, for the sake of an empty title? He had risen from his seat among the joys of a

domestic banquet, and consigned his unsuspecting guest to the Roman inquisitor!

Galileo would not give his enemies the satisfaction of burning him alive. He knew that, whilst he lived, there was no rest for them. He resolved to fight by evasion and stratagem: to yield where resistance could be of no avail.

It was not that he stood in any apprehension of personal danger. Had he only thought of his safety, were there not a hundred protestant lands eager to welcome the illustrious emigrant? But he wanted to combat prejudice on its own ground,—to baffle papal and jesuitical rage on the very threshold of the Vatican.

He would be no martyr, but a conqueror!

He had justly appreciated the chances of the day. He was well aware that he had friends and confederates even in the enemy's encampments. The popes were not always adverse to his principles. Paul V., with whom he had a private interview, at the epoch of his first summons before the Inquisition in 1615, assured him, that whilst he was seated on the papal throne, none of his opponents could prevail against him. Seven years later he had been invited to Rome by Urban VIII., at his exaltation, and liberal pensions had been bestowed upon him and his son. It was that same Urban who had rescued Campanella from

the hands of his Spanish tormentors,—the same that had appointed Galileo's friend and pupil, Castelli, to the place of his mathematician and astronomer. One of the pope's friends, Prince Federico Cesi, was the founder of that famous Roman academy, Dei Lincei, which numbered Galileo among its first members, and which, more or less, openly embraced his views.

But, on the other hand, he perceived that his reconciliation with the church was neither unlimited nor unconditional. He saw ignorance and fanaticism still lurking among the ranks of the papal militia. He longed to come to an open engagement. He placed hinself in the forlorn hope of that unequal combat: he did not come off unscathed, but secured victory to his side.

In 1632, he gave out at Florence his "System of the World," for which he had, through the favour of his friends, obtained the licence of the censors at Rome. He had promised to his first judge, Cardinal Bellarmine, in 1615, never again to teach the theory of the earth's motion, which had brought him once before the inquisitorial tribunal.

He did not defend that system; but his dialogues contained all arguments pro and contra; nor was it his fault if the Ptolemaic theory could not stand the full glare of broad daylight.

Urban VIII. was incensed against him. Those of Galileo's friends who survived at Rome, were dismissed. The Grand Duke Ferdinand II., successor of Cosmo II., though not without reluctance, abandoned him to his fate. He was brought before the Holy Office at Rome, in 1633, already overcome by age and infirmities.

He offered no resistance. He felt that the battle had been fought and won. The rest was of little consequence to him or to the world. He abjured—he abandoned his theories; but when he felt assured that they were utterly, incontrovertibly, eternally demonstrated; when he was certain that they had become the inheritance of the latest posterity; he rose from the feet of the tribunal—he stamped on the ground, and exclaimed, with that dreaded ironical smile that was habitual to him—"Eppure si muove!"—It has moved ever since.

He died blind, broken-hearted, and weary, a prisoner of the Inquisition, in his own house at Arcetri, in 1642. The Dominicans refused to bury him in consecrated ground. His countrymen entombed him in Santa Croce—the Westminster of Italy. Permission to erect his monument was denied by the popes till thirty years after his death.*

* Galileo's works: "Nuntius Sidereus," Padua, 1610.

The telescopic discoveries of Galileo, to which he owed his popular celebrity, do not constitute his greatest claims to the title of founder of modern science in Italy. Neither does his glory rest on those luminous theories by which the laws of mechanics, statics, and dynamics, were first established, as much as it does on that moral courage and perseverance to which science is indebted for its final emancipation. Galileo offered himself as an expiatory victim on the altar of truth: the victim was immolated, but truth prevailed. After Galileo's death no attempt was made, on the part of the church, to combat the theory of the earth's motion. None of his pupils were persecuted. The memory of his grievances was their safeguard.

It was the fortune of Galileo to leave behind him a number of great men, all entitled by their genius to accomplish the mission to which he had led the way.

Castelli and Torricelli, the first his best friend and advocate at the court of Urban, who died of sorrow soon after his death; the last his inseparable companion in his hours of illness,—are justly considered as the creators of the science

"Dialoghi Dei due Massimi Sistemi del Mondo," Florence, 1632. "Scienza Meccanica," 1634. "Nuova Scienza," 1638. Complete edition of his works, Padua, 1744.

of hydraulics. Another of his pupils, Cavalieri, had no slight share in the progress of mathematics, by his treatise of Indivisibles; whilst Borelli, also one of the few who stood by Galileo's deathbed, gave a new impulse to physiological pursuits, by his unrivalled work on the Mechanics of Animal Movement.

Finally, the last but most enthusiastic of his disciples,—the good and modest Viviani,—received the homage of all the academies of Europe, who acknowledged him as the greatest mathematician of his age.

The influence of Galileo's fame, and the efforts of his pupils, spread a great lustre on the whole of the seventeenth century. After the dispersion of the Lyncean academy in 1630, the friends of Galileo rallied in Florence; and, under the patronage of Leopoldo de Medici, brother of the Grand Duke Ferdinand II., founded, in 1657, the most famous scientific institution in Italy, under the name of the academy "del Cimento." The first members of that illustrious, though short-lived association, were, besides Borelli and Viviani, the physicians Malpighi, Magalotti, Bellini, and the accomplished Redi, who, to his profound knowledge of natural sciences, added an exquisite taste for polite literature, and gave Italy the best specimen of dithyrambic poetry.

Thus, although Gassendi, Descartes, and Kepler, were contemporaneous with Galileo, and Newton was born in the very year of his death, still as long as the spirit of the great philosopher survived, Italy had not yielded her boast of scientific supremacy.—Louis XIV. seemed at least to think so; for he had recourse to the most tempting offers to invite, and almost to violence to detain, Cassini at his court, as if in despair to find, on the other side of the Alps, another whom he might trust with the care of his newly-erected observatory.

The descendants of that illustrious Italian have, during four generations, equally inherited his place and his fame, adding to the glory of a name which Italy and France equally claimed as their own.

CHAPTER II.

METASTASIO, GOLDONI, ALFIERI.

Political events at the commencement of the eighteenth century: Changes in the national character—History: Muratori, Tiraboschi, Giannone—The opera: Metastasio, Casti—Comedy: Goldoni—*Cicisbeism*—Parini—Present state of the opera and comedy—Alfieri—His character—His style.

MEANWHILE, at the opening of the eighteenth century, Europe was convulsed with war. The last descendants of the house of Charles V. in Spain, after having consummated the utter ruin of their Italian provinces, left them, at their extinction, a prey to the ambition of the different powers of Europe. The peace of Utrecht, in 1713, adjudged them to the imperial house of Austria. Presently, new political interests gave rise to fresh contentions; and when Italy was finally suffered to be definitely at rest at the peace of Aix-la-chapelle, in 1748,

it was once more reduced under the supreme, though less unlimited, ascendency of Austria.

During those eight and forty years of European calamities, the different states of Italy were invaded with incessant vicissitudes. The greatest number of the Italian princely families had become extinct; their dominions passed under the rule of new dynasties; they were by turns incorporated or partitioned according to the chances of victory—sold or bartered in compliance with diplomatic speculation, but the Italian people were never consulted as to their ultimate destination, nor ever stood up in vindication of their rights.

This state of passive submissiveness was not so much the consequence of the utter extinction of public spirit in Italy, as of the new ideas of legitimacy arising from the consolidation of monarchical power, and the gradual suppression of feudal and municipal orders, all over the continent. It had at least the effect of preventing evils, that a powerless resistance would otherwise have brought upon the country.

The final results of those complicated hostilities, were also less unfavourable to Italy, than might have been expected from its helplessness and inactivity. The mutual jealousy of the different potentates that weighed its fate at Aix-la-chapelle, left that country in possession of

a greater share of independence than it could boast of at the opening of that period of warfare.

The house of Savoy, accustomed to profit by every European disturbance, had reached its height of power during the wars for the Spanish and Austrian succession. The frequent defections, and the false policy of those wary princes, had, indeed, repeatedly brought them to the last brink of ruin; but the valour of Prince Eugene, the greatest hero of his age, had restored the fortunes of his house; and, besides the addition of wide territories to their ancestoral dominions in Piedmont, the princes of Savoy had exchanged their ducal coronet for a royal diadem.

In the south, the Spanish provinces of Naples and Sicily, after two centuries of foreign bondage, were erected into an independent kingdom, and given to a prince of the Bourbons of Spain; whilst another of the lackland infants of that house had been accommodated with the duchy of Parma after the extinction of the last Farnese. Milan and Mantua had been allotted to Austria; and a prince of the new imperial line had ascended the vacant throne of Tuscany.

Such were the political changes inflicted on Italy by that long alternation of warlike and

diplomatic transactions. But it was not difficult to perceive that all that remained of national power, had been extinguished long before this new arrangement took place. Such of the Italian states as were not immediately implicated in those endless disputes, were unable to protect themselves, notwithstanding their improvident schemes of neutrality. Venice and Genoa, whose last shade of republican institutions were obnoxious to the despotic policy of the age, were more wantonly, and with more impunity, trampled upon. Venice, stripped of its last oriental possessions by the war of the Morea in 1718; Genoa, subdued and humbled by the unprovoked attack of Louis XIV. in 1684, deprived of the island of Corsica in consequence of its own mismanagement—both impoverished by the rapid extinction of their Mediterranean trade—those two republics lingered on in a state of dotage and torpor, awaiting their final hour of dissolution.

The papal power also, both spiritual and temporal, gave symptoms of rapid decline. Braved in their own capital by the insolence of the ambassadors of Louis XIV. in 1662 harassed by the schismatic controversies of the Jansenists, which led to an almost total emancipation of the Gallican clergy; deprived of the support of the jesuits, whose relaxed discipline

and perverted morals, and the universal abhorrence of all Europe, finally determined Clement XIV. on their final suppression in 1773; compelled to behold the frequent violation of their neutral territories, and to submit to arbitrary encroachments on their feudal rights,—the popes of the eighteenth century, for the most part as wise, liberal, and moderate a set of men as ever sat on the chair of St. Peter, felt that they were doomed to atone for the deeds of iniquity of their predecessors, and seemed perpetually haunted by the forebodings of their imminent destruction.

Thus tottered and crumbled all that belonged to old Italy. What had been left standing by Charles V., was shaken to its foundations by Louis XIV.: what had escaped the ravages of Louis XIV., was, after a short interval, to be levelled to the ground by Napoleon.

But the moral energies of the conquered nation had undergone a more vital change than its political condition. The fierce spirit that the civil feuds of republican anarchy had engendered and nourished—that the lawless oppression of Spain had aggravated and perverted, had yielded before the long influence of a corruptive refinement, and the long desuetude of arms. Of all nations of Europe, the Italians, both as a people, and even as individuals, may

be said to have taken the least part in the wars of the eighteenth century; and though they were far indeed from being free from the disasters of military vastation and licentiousness, still they seemed to consider silent, unarmed endurance as the best safeguard against inevitable aggression.

The only instance of popular retaliation against soldierly insolence, was exhibited by the Genoese populace, always the hardiest race in Italy, when, in 1746, they rose against the Austrians of Maria Theresa, and with no other weapons than stones and knives, drove a whole host from their walls.

But, with this single exception, the Italians had laid aside, together with their sword, also the dagger and poison, which, in the seventeenth century, it must be confessed, had become their national weapons. It seemed as if even crime and vice had lost much of its vigour and manliness, and obeyed the enervating influence of the age. The example set by the Bourbon courts of Naples and Parma, and even by that of Savoy, which, however politically allied with Austria—however, for more than two centuries established in Italy, still made a display of transalpine manners—had substituted French levity and frivolity for Spanish pride and vindictiveness. The feline temper of the Spaniard

gave way before the apish nature of the French.

This easy and yielding disposition on the part of their subjects, inspired the new rulers with more lenient and benevolent feelings. After the cessation of hostilities in 1748, Italy was governed by monarchs who aspired to the glory of reformers and legislators. The progress and diffusion of knowledge had broken the sceptre of religious tyranny, and declared war to that fanaticism, which, in Italy, had never been a natural growth. The Emperor Joseph II., in Lombardy, and the Grand Duke Peter Leopold, in Tuscany, who began to reign in 1765, had the fame of attempting innovations by far in advance of their age.

The Italians, in fact, had been, for two hundred years, schooled to accept good and evil with passive resignation, such as it pleased the established authority to administer it, or to combat it only by evasion and subterfuge. They seemed to place their felicity in an unconditional abnegation of civil duties, and in a total abstraction from public life.

But if the people had ceased to aspire to the enjoyment of political rights, the wealthier and more enlightened classes had not equally renounced the ambition of intellectual activity. On the contrary, literature and the arts remained as a last resource to men for whom the

gallantries of a dissipated life had no longer sufficient attraction. Truly, for a long time, and to a certain extent, literature seemed to share in the general relaxation of the national character; but, by degrees, thought reassumed its wonted ascendency over matter; it communicated to it that restless life, that necessity of movement and action, that constitute the essential property of its immortal nature. It engendered disgust and repentance, resentment and reaction; it raised man to a consciousness of his own power and dignity; it reformed, reawakened, redeemed.

The rapid advancement of the transalpine nations in every branch of science and literature, no less than in political power and commercial prosperity, had been coeval with the late period of Italian decline. Elated by success, exulting in their vigour and youth, some of them, especially the French, always vainglorious and boastful, seemed to insult the misfortunes of Italy by their bitter animadversions against the degeneracy of the fallen race,—by their blind disavowal of the services it had rendered to the cause of civilization and humanity,—by their unscrupulous defraudation of its early claims to the promotion of the interests of learning.

Thus, the first use that the invaders made of

light they had, for the most part, derived from Italy, was to reproach that country with what was only the consequence of their own work of destruction. From a state of intellectual dependence, almost bordering on absolute, undiscerning servility, they passed to the opposite extremes of presumption and ingratitude. They dated the history of the modern world from their first invasions of Italy in the sixteenth century, and endeavoured to bury in oblivion those previous epochs, which might have sounded less flattering to their vanity.

The Italians were not so dead to all feelings of national pride, as to submit to such flagrant injustice. They fell back on the memorials of the past; they were determined to know themselves; they made a rapid enumeration of their merits, as soldiers, legislators, poets, and thinkers. They wrote their civil and literary history.

That age of political death was but too fatally favourable to their work of historical erudition.

History, such as it had flourished in Italy in the classical age of Guicciardini, was merely a branch of exornative literature. So long as the particulars of a battle were drawn vividly and with harmony of language; so long as a real or imaginary speech was reported with all the re-

dundance that constituted eloquence in that age, no one took the pains to ascertain its authenticity. Jealous of the purity of their Latin, and, in later times, of their Tuscan languages, the Italian classicists suffered the semi-barbarous chronicles of the middle ages to lie unheeded and forgotten.

Still, the materials for a general compilation of their national history, had not been suffered to perish. The patriotism of their municipal governments, the vanity of their noble families, the diligence of their antiquarians, had provided against their dispersion. The precious depositaries of the records of the past, seemed to have escaped the ravages of time, of sacking and conflagration, to send down their treasures safely, for the gratification of posterity. There they lay in scrolls, parchments, and manuscripts; huge folios and ponderous quartos piled up—the shelves groaning under their weight, dark, dusty, and silent, like spell-bound warriors, threatening the daring man who should attempt to break the enchantment.

Yet the enchantment was broken, and with luminous success. A hero was found, not enervated, even by the seductions of a southern climate, or of an effeminate age; willing to shut himself up in those haunted chambers, abjuring all the ties and charms of social and

domestic life, to grapple with the phantoms of the dead,—to rescue from them the secret of the past.

Muratori, a giant with a hundred eyes and a hundred hands, one of those antique frames cast in bronze and steel, which would almost induce us to believe in a deterioration of the human race at the present day, left us the result of his labours, which would appear wonderful, even if, like Nestor, he had outlived three generations.

Placed over the Ambrosian library in Milan, and the Estense in Modena; aided by the researches and subventions of the Società Palatina, whose members belonged to the most conspicuous Milanese nobility, he was enabled to publish nearly all that could then be found on the subject of Italian history. Finally, he attempted to give some order and system to that formless mass, by his original work, "Annali d' Italia," in sixteen volumes, which he was said to have written in the almost miraculously short space of one year.*

But, though by far the most industrious and celebrated, Muratori was not the only efficient

* Ludovico Antonio Muratori, born, 1672; died, 1750. "Antiquitates Italicæ Medii Ævi," Milan, 1738 — 1742, 6 vols. fol., "Rerum Italicarum Scriptores," 1723—1751, 25 vols., fol. "Annali d' Italia," 1744—1749, etc.

labourer in laying open the treasures of Italian archives. The same ardour invaded the learned all over the country; and the municipal or provincial records of every town and province were almost contemporaneously brought into light.

Meanwhile, under the protection of the same liberal prince, Francis III. of Modena, Tiraboschi searched the monuments of Italian genius in previous ages, weighed them with an often enlightened, always impartial criticism, plunged into the depth of biographical and bibliographical research with unwearied diligence, and vindicated his country's literary claims with a zeal that won him the respect even of his foreign opponents.*

Equally laborious undertakings were accomplished in reference to the literary productions of every separate district of the country; they were extended to the illustration of every department of science and art.

Men, endowed with brighter minds, in the meantime, strove to associate the weight of erudition with the attractive charms of ornamental style, or the important lessons of political wisdom. The Marquis Maffei, rather a restless and versatile, than an active genius; rather ostentatious than ambitious; embracing

* Girolamo Tiraboschi, born, 1731; died, 1794. "Storia della Letteratura Italiana," 12 vols., 4to., Modena, 1770—1782.

with equal eagerness every new pursuit that promised excitement or celebrity, and yet not less ardent and persevering in the most arduous undertakings; at once a warrior, a poet, a wit, and a scholar, gave us, in his "Verona Illustrata," the model of a work that might prove equally interesting to the most idle no less than the most indefatigable class of readers.*

Pietro Giannone, of Naples, a man of a firm, deep, daring character, after the stamp of republican Italy, aimed not so much to illustrate the historical memorials, and the political institutions of his country, as to demolish the last remnants of that edifice of catholic superstition that, even on the eve of its downfal, lay still, like a cumbrous ruin, on the way of future Italian emancipation. He declared war against the pope. The unhappy historian was soon made aware that he had too far relied on the patronage of the royal reformers of his age; and that, tottering, as it was, to its very foundation, the church of Rome had still power to crush an unarmed adversary. Persecuted by a priest-ridden populace at Naples, unable to find a permanent shelter at Vienna, Milan, Modena, and Venice, Giannone emigrated to Geneva, whence, decoyed by the treacherous promises

* Scipione Maffei, born at Verona, 1675; died, 1755. "Verona Illustrata," 1732.

of the agents of government, he ventured into the Piedmontese territory, where he was delivered into the hands of the Inquisition, and died in the dungeons of the citadel of Turin, after a captivity of above twenty years.*

This prevalent spirit of erudite inquiry which taught the Italians to dwell too fondly on the past, if it was beneficial to elevate the national character, inasmuch as it gave that people full knowledge of themselves, it had also the effect of engendering those false aristocratic notions by which the Italians have been, and are still inclined to bring forward the exertions and achievements of their forefathers, as if entitled by them to a life of dissipation and indolence.

Still, the eighteenth century was far from being altogether an idle, retrospective age. The spirit of Galileo lived yet in the schools and academies, and natural sciences continued to flourish with unabated vigour. The Academy del Cimento had been dispersed only ten years after its foundation; but similar institutions sprang up every where at Naples, Milan, and Bologna. In this last university, Morgagni had inherited the fame of Malpighi, which he trans-

* Pietro Giannone, born, 1676; arrested, 1736; died a prisoner, 1748. "Storia Civile del Regno di Napoli," 4 vols. 4to., 1723.

mitted to his successors, Mascagni, Spallanzani, Vacca, and Scarpa, down to the present times, when Italy still occupies her high rank among the European nations, in the medical sciences.

In the meanwhile, Lagrange, Piazzi, and Oriani, raised their names to the level of the greatest mathematicians and astronomers; whilst the example of two learned ladies, Laura Bassi, and Gaetana Agnesi, both professors of mathematics at Bologna; and the popular works of Cagnoli, Algarotti, and Mascheroni, contributed to render the most abstruse studies accessible and attractive to the less active and persevering minds.

But the cultivators of poetry and polite literature were more numerous than the votaries of science. It has been said, perhaps with some reason, that even without its superiority in foregoing ages, Italian literature might stand the parallel of other nations, by its productions of the eighteenth century. A great number of those poets, however, owe their celebrity merely to the close vicinity at which we contemplate them, and are sure to fade in the vastness of space. Faithful to our system, we pass by them in silence, and with indifference, even by such men as Passeroni, and Frugoni, notwithstanding the one hundred and one long cantos of a poem on the "Life of

Cicero," and the nine large volumes of lyrical poems, on which those famous bards had grounded their titles to immortal renown. We hasten to that branch of literature for which Italy will be for ever indebted to the poets of the eighteenth century—the national drama.

The corruption of the Italian theatre, since its earliest revival, had continued during two centuries with an alarming progress. Unable to emancipate themselves from the fetters of classical imitation, the dramatists of the country had gradually yielded the stage to the histrionic extravagances of untutored actors. The worst productions of the Spanish theatre were performed before the Milanese and Neapolitan audiences, disfigured by absurd parodies and caricatures, so as to suit the more lively fancy of our people. Successively some attempts were made to substitute the French for the Spanish taste, in proportion as the manners of the latter nation gave way in Italy before the influence of their more elegant neighbours: so that, at the opening of the eighteenth century, Italy had long been accustomed to depend on foreign nations for its dramatic literature, and suffered Spain and France to reign uncontrolled.

Fortunately, towards the close of the sixteenth century, a new, eminently Italian per-

formance had been attempted with astonishing success in Florence, which was soon not only to supersede those exotic productions in Italy, but which eventually threatened to drive the drama from the stage, all over the world—the melodrama.

I shall not attempt to vindicate the Italians from the charge of sensuality and effeminacy of taste, to which their blind partiality for the opera has given rise. The rapid diffusion of that formless style of performance amply demonstrated how even the sounder judgment of more sober nations might be carried away by the allurements of music.

The opera is, perhaps, much less of an animal enjoyment, than is generally supposed. It has some advantages over the drama, to which rigid censors have not often adverted. The emotion wrought on the human soul by a dramatic performance, must be the result of close attention, of absolute, long continued abstraction. The drama is a tyrant that must absorb all your faculties, and whose chance of success depends on a thorough illusion: a slight reaction of reflection, an instant of preoccupation, of listlessness, or ennui; an ill timed jest, a fortuitous interruption,—and the spell is broken, and the interest slackens.

Not so the opera. Music is no intruder. It

asks for no admittance into the sanctuary of the mind; it hovers round its threshold like the minstrel at the entrance of a nuptial apartment; it breaks not, interferes not with the train of thoughts and feelings; it brings into them a gentle agitation; it fans them, gives them an harmonious, delicate turn; it rouses, soothes, spiritualizes them.

The effect of music is immediate. It requires no activity on the part of the mind; it urges not, importunes not; it steals upon us unconsciously, unexpectedly, when our eyes are turned away from the spectacle,—when our cares, or sorrows, unfit us for every other mental exertion.

By the invention of a spectacle in which every thing was calculated to give music a boundless ascendency, the Italians provided for the wants of their own restless, and highly sensitive nature, which sought in the theatre the sources of an easy and genial relaxation; and to which a long, silent sitting of above six hours in a play-house, as the good customers of Covent Garden, or the Haymarket, have the constancy to endure,—would be utter misery.

From the earliest revival of the drama, music had always been, in Italy, accessary to theatrical performances.

The choruses of our early tragedies, and especially of pastorals, were generally sung and accompanied with instruments; whilst the interludes were in fact nothing but a mixture of vocal and instrumental music, and ballets.

By a fortunate combination of circumstances, music, which, during the earliest part of the sixteenth century, had been suffered to fall into neglect, was, towards the year 1560, revived by the deep, meditative genius of Palestrina. The revolution accomplished by his masses at the Vatican, extended its influence over the stage no less than the choir. Since that time, dramatic performances were only endured for the sake of their musical accompaniments.

It was in that epoch, that Ottavio Rinuccini, a poet of limited abilities, allied himself with three musicians of note, Peri, Corsi, and Caccini, and, in 1594, exhibited, on the Florentine stage, "La Daphne," a pastoral drama, composed in lyrical verses, and wholly adapted to music. The "Daphne" was soon followed by the "Euridice," which was performed on the celebration of the nuptials of Henry IV. and Mary de Medici, in 1600. The new spectacle was soon carried beyond the Alps, together with its inventor, by the Tuscan princess, whose favourite —some say, lover—the poet was, and was wel-

comed at every court in Italy and abroad, with unabated enthusiasm, during the whole of the seventeenth century.

But that century was an age of extravagance, and the opera could not be expected to escape its corrupting influence. As poetry had given way to music, so even music yielded its sceptre to the exhibitions of theatrical machinery. The vastness and commodiousness of the Italian play-houses afforded full scope for the most whimsical pranks of the artist's imagination. The opera became a phantasmagory—a jugglery—a sabbath of fairies and demons, of which nothing but an English pantomime can suggest a remote idea.

But the man was born who was to reclaim the opera from the state of degradation into which it had sunk. Apostolo Zeno, born and brought up in Venice—in that town where the opera, as well as every theatrical performance, was most eagerly cultivated, and where it met with the greatest encouragement—added to a refined poetical taste a wide store of historical erudition, by which he deserved no humble place among the collaborators of Muratori.

He was well versed in the Greek and Roman theatre; and shared in the universal admiration with which the works of Corneille and Racine had been recently received by his countrymen. He framed his operas on the model

of the French drama, as far at least as that style of composition admitted of the classical rules, to which the French had submitted themselves.*

Such was the origin of the tragic or heroic melodrama,—the opera of Metastasio.†

Metastasio was one of the few men of genius in Italy arising from the lowest ranks of society. All men are born equal; but their equality ends on their very birthday. The splendour that surrounds the high-born from his cradle, gives his sense of greatness the force of an inborn instinct.

Metastasio was bred up in squalor and indigence. Fortune soon repaired the disadvantages of his nativity; but could not equally destroy the influence of his early education.

He was pure, candid, incorruptible—disinterested and benevolent. His discernment and modesty induced him to decline titles and dignities; his sense of justice prevented him from accepting a splendid fortune, to the detriment of the rightful heir.

* Apostolo Zeno, born in Venice, 1669; Poeta Cesareo at Vienna, 1718—1731; died at Venice, 1750. "Opere Drammatiche," Venice, 1744, 10 vols. 8vo.

† Pietro Trapassi, born at Rome, 1698; adopted by the Senator Gravina, who called him Metastasio, 1708; appointed Poeta Cesareo at Vienna, by mediation of Zeno, 1729; arrived at Vienna, 1730; died, 1782.

But he had no dignity. From his earliest age, when the Senator Gravina took him from his father's shop, to his death at the court of Joseph II., when Pius VI. sent him his benediction, "in articulo mortis,"—he never saw one of fortune's frowns. The energies of his character were never put in requisition.

He loved his friends, was sensible to the devoted attachment of his high-minded Romanina, but he gave way to his feelings only as far as they were for him the source of pleasing emotions. When they bespoke sorrow or danger, he could shut his heart against them at his pleasure. The troubles of his imaginary heroes called tears upon his eyes—the tears of moral epicurism; the evils of real life allowed him to fatten undisturbed. He never experienced misfortune, and, perhaps, never believed in its existence.

If ever selfishness could find its abode in a poet's heart, that heart was Metastasio's.

He assumed the title of *abate*, an indefinable appellation, denoting an amphibious being, half-priest, half-man, entitled to all the charms, and exempt from all the charges of life. No wonder if he found the privileges of that rank preferable to the titles of knight, baron, and palatine count. He was beloved by the fair sex. Besides the Romanina, his angel at the

opening of his career, the beautiful and fiery Gabrielli, the queen of the opera, stole from the homage of the Italian multitude, and ran to Vienna incognito, to have an hour's conversation with him.

The Princess Marianna Pignatelli, a Neapolitan, married at Vienna, was also his intimate for life. He visited her twice a day, whether in fair weather or foul. He possessed, in the highest degree, that love of order and method, that regularity of habits, that shortens our days, and lengthens our years. His muse waited upon him at his bidding like a faithful handmaid. He flattered himself that a man of his sedate and serene temper could live for ever. In fact, whenever the slightest allusion to death, or to evils and disasters, was made before him, a cloud would set on his countenance. Not one hour of his existence had given him a dislike for what other people call this "vale of tears."

In his eighty-fourth year he preserved all the bloom and vigour of youth. He was a striking illustration of that proverb, that "poets never grow old." No poet, not excepting even Petrarch, ever went to his grave with a greater certainty of the immortality of his name. Metastasio envied, perhaps, the reputation that was to outlive him.

Heaven knows, flattery is an ancient art,

but he carried it so far that he seemed to have given it an air of originality. Adulation had become a second nature in him; and his incense was equally lavished to monarchs and princes, and to his humblest friends and attendants. As the man was, so was his poetry. Metastasio introduced no material innovation in the melodrama. He adopted the opera such as it had been left by his predecessor, Zeno. The opera is no drama. It knows nothing of dramatic rules, either romantic or classic. It has its own code of laws, and these are strict and inexorable. The number of personages is limited, so is almost the number of scenes and verses. The *tenore, prima donna,* and *basso,* are to have each a determined number of airs. These must follow each other in regular succession, according to stage etiquette. Duets, tercets, and choruses, must be equally distributed. An air is usually divided into several parts: the *adagio, andante, allegro, stretta* or *cabaletta,* according as it is an *aria, preghiera, cavatina, rondò* or *rondoletto.* The poet obeys the *maestro,* the *maestro* depends on the *impresario,* who, in his turn, receives the law from the *prima donna.*

Metastasio resigned himself to the established authorities. The laws that then governed the opera have been since altered, and his dramas have long been banished from the stage.

In a style of composition in which so very little latitude is left to dramatic art, in which the merit of invention consists in crowding together, in the smallest possible space, the greatest number of romantic incidents, of striking situations, and sudden catastrophes, no matter how much at the expense of probability and common sense, where hardly any leisure is given for the full development of characters, where the warmest scenes are stretched or clipped in obedience to the train of musical cadence, it is evident that the best chances of the poet's success must lie in the fascination of style.

This was the charm of Metastasio. The composition in which he excelled was hardly any thing before him, and nothing ever since. He was the opera.

Bred up in Rome, where the Arcadians had established their chief seat, Metastasio had a string in his heart that answered their softest melodies. His early proficiency in the art of an improvisatore had improved an ear exquisitely organised. To this sense exclusively he trusted his success.

The effect was sure, constant, immediate.

Every human affection seems to assume a gentle, voluptuous mood under his touch. Virtue seems so easy, so seducing and charming!

Passions are analysed with such an amusing metaphysical nicety! Love is so enthusiastic and holy! That ideal world is so beautifully rose-coloured!

There reigns all over his pages a languor, a tenderness, a morbidness, that seems like an opiate to transfer the reader into a region of dreams.

Do you wish to know where the secret magic of that poetry lies?—Translate any of those verses, and the enchantment vanishes.

The poetry of Metastasio is not of this world, no more than music is like human speech. We must look to another planet than the earth for the realization of the ideal life he depicted. It is a mixture of pastoral, chivalrous, heroic, romantic ideas, equally fitting his Assyrian and Roman, and his Chinese and Indian heroes.

Shall I say, with Metastasio's severest censors, that those patterns of ideal perfection, as they are not true to nature, so neither are they consistent with sound morals?—that that continual seduction of easy sentimentalism has an enervating effect on the manly energies of the human soul, which it ought to be the poet's duty to brace up and to temper, so as to fit it to bear through the struggles of life? Shall I, as others have done, call that sickly pathos,

that affected language, by the name of poetical jesuitism?

Who can account for the revolutions in the tastes and ideas of men? Metastasio, the idol of his age, the poet of women; for whose sake French and German ladies undertook the study of Italian; whose verses constituted the text of sensibility and love—Metastasio is setting!

The very spell of his musical language is broken. Since the Italians entertained the first faint hope of their national regeneration, Metastasio has been thrown aside as a dangerous corruptor. His style has been considered undignified, artificial, and monotonous. They fled from him in disgust, as if afraid of being lost in that everlasting sweetness, like a fly drowned in a vase of honey.

The proscribed author might be found still lingering on the ladies' toilet, until modern romances have fairly driven him out of that last refuge, and estranged from him even his compassionate supporters.

It was no slight triumph for Metastasio, and unexampled in the annals of musical poetry, that his operas could bear a cold perusal, and even a dramatic performance.

Still, a great part of their interest was lost when more recent innovations in the musical world unfitted his works for their primitive

destination. After his death no limit was put to the encroachments of music. The opera dwindled to scarcely one-third of its original size. Its verses are no longer dignified by the name of poetry, but are simply called *parole;* the piece is no longer styled either drama or melodrama, but *libretto.* Poets who have any respect for themselves, have long since ceased to write for the opera; and the public have laid aside all expectation of finding any thing like common sense in that monstrous performance.

But an Italian theatre is something inconceivably anomalous. The opera-house is a place of habitual resort, of fashionable rendezvous. Every box is a diminutive drawing-room; at Milan and Naples, even a banqueting parlour. In the pit, in the gallery, in the six tiers of boxes, there are other interests at stake than the catastrophe on the stage. Everywhere there is nodding, and smiling, and flirting, and waving of fans and handkerchiefs: two-thirds at least of the performance are drowned by the murmur of a general conversation, until, occasionally, a burst of applause, or the strokes of the director of the orchestra, announce the entrance of a favourite singer, or the prelude to a popular air; when, as if by a common accord, that confused roar of six thousand voices is instantly hushed; all laughing,

coquetting, and iced-champagne-drinking, are broken short; and all the actors in the minor stages submit themselves for five minutes to behave like a well-mannered and intelligent audience.

In such a state of things, it may be understood, that no great justice can be paid to the poet's abilities. The libretto-maker is generally an uneducated wretch, who sells his works for a few crowns apiece. No composer ever showed a more utter disregard for poetry, than the celebrated Rossini. The verses of "Semiramide," "Otello," or "Tancredi," are a disgrace to the literature of the country.

The comic opera, or *opera buffa*, fared generally better, because those vulgar *guasta-mestieri* are not generally deprived of a certain degree of farcical humour, and because dramatic incongruencies are less striking in a style of writing where absurdity is more avowedly the order of the day.

The comic opera, whose origin is coeval with the melodrama,—the first having been performed at Venice, in 1597,—was brought to perfection by Metastasio's successor at the court of Vienna, Giambattista Casti.*

This bright and fertile, though extravagant

* Giambattista Casti, born, 1721; Poeta Cesareo, 1782; left Vienna, 1790; died at Paris, 1804. "Gli Animali Par-

and pernicious genius,—whose ease, grace, and spontaneousness, were seldom equalled in Italy; whose verses, wherever untainted with the corrupting poison of unbridled licentiousness, have, perhaps, been the model of the happiest stanzas of "Beppo," and "Don Juan,"—only wrote a few dramas during his short sojourn, as a poet-laureate to Joseph II., at Vienna, some of which occasionally reappear, though not without some modification, on the stage.

His fame, however, or his infamy, must rest on those works to which he gave the last finish in France: the "Novelle," and "Animali Parlanti."

Casti was brought up among the seductions of a dissolute age. The gallant adventures of his checkered life; his residence at the court of Catherine II. of Russia; the disorders he witnessed during the disorganizing age of the French revolution, had given him the most perverted ideas of human nature. He painted the world as he saw it: the gallant world in his lubric tales; the political, in his apologues. Nothing to him was sacred or pure. He disbelieved virtue; and tore open the veil of modesty, under pretence of unmasking hypo-

lanti," Paris, 1802, 3 vols. "Novelle Galanti," 4 vols., Paris, 1793. 1804. "Il Poema Tartaro," Milan, 1803. "Poesie Liriche," etc.

crisy. With a wanton consistency, the octogenarian libertine revelled in the remembrance of his juvenile scenes of debauchery. Even on the brink of the grave, to his last day, he laid his rose-woven snares on the path of inexperienced youth, always equally inaccessible to shame or remorse.

But the comic opera has lately fallen into comparative disrepute. The days are long since gone by, when the "Catone" of Metastasio was hissed at Rome, on account of its tragical catastrophe. The Italians are now seized with a contrary mania. Not only the opera, but even the pantomime, has become an exhibition of startling atrocities. Nothing short of the death of the prima donna will satisfy the blood-thirstiness of our audiences. Happy the poet who contrives to bury his heroine alive. The best of Bellini or Donizetti's operas, such as Norma, Beatrice Tenda, Parisina, or Anna Bolena, are thus terminated by the executioner's axe. The sublime scenes of Viganò's pantomimes, "La Vestale," "Ines de Castro," and "Gabriella di Vergy," are calculated to harrow up the spectator's imagination with anguish and terror.

The most distinguished writer of these lyrical tragedies, is the advocate Felice Romani, of Genoa, a man of taste and education, chosen by Bellini as his associate in his reform

of the melodrama. Bellini, a noble and delicate genius, was the first composer who seemed aware of the importance of the co-operation of poetry. He felt how far the spontaneousness of musical inspiration must depend on its accordance with poetical effusion. He fitted his music to the melody of the verse, and did not, like Rossini or Donizetti, force the verse to the cadence of the music. By the efforts of two kindred minds, Romani and Bellini, the opera was raised to as high a degree of excellence as that performance could attain. "Norma," and "La Sonnambula," as dramas, are constructed on a more simple and rational plan, display more animation and warmth, and are, on the whole, more interesting productions than some of Metastasio's best models. The style is equally soft and melodious, but less effeminate and luscious. To the Anacreontic sweetness proper to classical epicurism, Romani substituted the passionate transport, the plaintive melancholy of Romanticism. Only the shortness of the recitation, and the rapidity of dialogue, interfere with the development of characters, and the general movement of action; so that Romani's works will not, like Metastasio's, bear too close an inspection, when stripped of the *prestige* of music and scenic representation.

The success of the opera, though it proved fatal to the interests of dramatic poetry, did not, however, discourage the production of classical works. From the first specimens given by Bibbiena and Ariosto, to the age of Goldoni, no less than five thousand comedies in the ancient style were published, few of which ever appeared, none endured, on the stage. They were only performed in private theatres, by academical amateurs. The extemporary farces known by the name of "Commedia dell' Arte," had more attraction for the ignorant multitude. The same strolling players were both composers and actors. A poet generally accompanied the wandering company, whose office it was to lay a new plan for the evening; the rest was left to the inventive talent of the actor. The masks, an ancient national contrivance, naturally assigned to each actor his part, and determined his character. The main charm of those formless performances, resulted from the natural promptness of the Italians for extemporaneous exhibition, the alacrity of their satirical humour, and the peculiarities of their argute popular dialects. Such was the state of Italian comedy when the reformer appeared.*

* Carlo Goldoni, born at Venice, 1707; appointed director of the Italian theatre at Paris, 1761; died, 1793. First edition of his "Theatre," Venice, 1753, 10 vols., 8vo. Complete

The life of Goldoni, such, at least, as results from his memoirs, is but a comedy. It is one of the most amusing episodes in the drama of real life.

Born in Venice, that city of carnival, surrounded from his boyhood with all the noise and bustle of his grandfather's private theatricals; running away from college in his fourteenth year, to join a troop of strolling players; expelled for misdemeanour at the university, for his indulgence in his satirical genius; by turns, seized with fits of religious compunction, and resolving to repair to a Franciscan convent, and again giving way before worldly temptations; shifting his residence from town to town with vagrant restlessness; cheated, now by cowled, now by mustachioed swindlers, now by painted stage-princesses; a lawyer, a physician, a chancellor in a court of law, an encyclopedical adventurer; to-day an ambassador's guest, to-morrow a penniless pedestrian, but never deserted by his appetite, by his good humour and luck; always reckless of the future. He had but two ample opportunities of making his apprenticeship in the world, ere he seriously set himself about representing it on the stage.

It was only in his fortieth year, that, encou-

edition, Leghorn, 1788—1791, 31 vols., 8vo. "Memorie," 3 vols., 8vo.

raged by the success of his first essays, he established himself in his native town, and proceeded to the accomplishment of his scheme of dramatic reform.

His task was fraught with uncommon difficulties. The actors were attached to a system which demanded of them rather readiness of wit and imagination, than laborious preparation.

They had imported a few Spanish extravagances, in which their coarse scurrilities were blended with supernatural apparitions. They had a certain number of set speeches, which they knew how to insert in every play. The harlequins and pantaloons could not be prevailed upon to part with their masks, nor the public with their ghosts and goblins. "None of your staid comedies," said they, "will ever go through as many representations as the famous 'Convitato di Pietra.'"

Goldoni could not combat prejudice by an open attack: he came to a compact with it. He flattered the public taste until he had secured its suffrage; he yielded to his actors until he had become necessary to them; the mask gradually dropped from their faces; the incidents of every day's life were substituted for the wild pranks of supernatural jugglery; and the stage was once more trodden by living and breathing personages, whose errors and oddities were intended as a salutary mirror to the beholders.

Goldoni attempted this innovation at his full cost and peril. He found himself obliged to make up for the comparative tameness of his performances by their endless variety. During the year 1750, he supplied the theatre of St. Luke with sixteen new comedies, all written in the space of a twelvemonth. They are among his best productions, and were received with unanimous acclamation. His health suffered from that intense exertion, and he felt the consequences of it during the rest of his life. By the labours of that, and a few following years, however, his endeavours were crowned with complete success.

Over-rated as the productions of Goldoni may be said to have been by his countrymen, they have, however, been rather too hastily and indiscriminately censured abroad. The best of his comedies are still unknown ground for foreign critics. We never meet with any attempt at a rational examination of any but the worst of them, such as "La Bottega del Caffè," "Il Servitor di due Padroni," and other such premature essays, in which efforts, poor Goldoni, while he gradually endeavoured to reform the bad taste of his contemporaries, was yet obliged to submit to it. These are also the first that are given to foreigners as his "Commedia Scelte." Sismondi, from whose eyes the spec-

tacles of criticism seem invariably to fall, whenever he loses sight of his faithful escort, Ginguené, has grounded his judgment merely on a few of these primitive performances.

Goldoni's masterpieces in the Venetian dialect, such as "Le Donne Gelose," "I Rusteghi," "Le Baruffe Chiozzotte," and perhaps twenty others, which are a living picture of low life in that part of Italy, where national manners preserved to the last their most striking peculiarities,—a picture of Venice—no longer the bride of the ocean, no longer the arbiter of the destiny of nations, but burying the disgrace of its impending downfal in the ebriety of perpetual bacchanals—those comedies are still, on account of the language, works of very difficult access even to persons conversant with Italian. The recent reaction in favour of Goldoni, brought about especially by the exertions of Augusto Bon and his excellent company, has rendered the Venetian dialect familiar to Italian ears, and given it a peculiar charm in the different provinces; but a French or German critic must not be expected to relish Goldoni's idioms any more than an Italian could appreciate the atticisms of Sam Weller.

But more attention ought, at least, to have been paid to the "Cavaliere e la Dama," "La Dama Prudente," and other comedies, in which

Goldoni gave so lively a portraiture of the manners of the higher classes, such as they were in the idle and thoughtless period that preceded the French revolution, with all their intrigues and mysteries of ancient Italian *cicisbeism.*

This artificial system of fashionable demoralization, however the Italians may justly have borne the ridicule attached to it, was not, in its origin, a production of indigenous growth. Jealousy was the main trait of the Italian character. "Chi ama teme" was one of our earliest proverbs. The first pang of jealousy makes the Italian aware of the existence of love. Hence, notwithstanding the precocious development of civilization in Italy, women in republican times were watched over with anxious care; and an Italian house was beset with all the gloom and loneliness of an eastern harem. This suspicious mood increased in days of tyranny, when the peaceful citizen trembled for all that he held dear in life. It assumed still darker colours under the influence of the Spaniards, among whom that system of domestic tyranny was the natural result of their Moorish descent: it was blended with the vindictive ferocity prevailing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the dagger and poison stood as guarantees for conjugal fidelity.

The transalpine nations, especially the

French, combated Italian suspiciousness with the irresistible weapon of ridicule. Locks and bars gave way before the overpowering sovereignty of fashion. Enterprising gallantry forced its way into the inmost recess of the domestic sanctuary.

But among the Italians,—a southern people,—an extreme can only be cured by falling into the opposite. No sooner were they made ashamed of their jealousy, than they put no limits to their eagerness in disavowing and discountenancing it. To betray any symptom of that besetting complaint, became an unpardonable offence. There was no ordeal to which the martyr of fashion would not submit, rather than expose himself to the raillery of the world. The possessor of a handsome wife was not only bound to produce her, but to launch her into the vortex of a corrupted society. He gave up his rights and privileges, and, according to all appearances, allowed her to become another man's property.

That man was the *cicisbeo* or *cavalier servente.*

The incautiousness of young brides recently issuing from the innocence of their claustral education, the audacity of unprincipled libertines, who sought, in the wanton boastings of amorous conquest, an excitement that political

or commercial enterprise no longer afforded, must undoubtedly have rendered that anomalous intercourse, in many instances, dangerous and fatal.

Still, the very frivolousness of that more giddy than guilty age, had power to prevent that foolish practice from being carried to the utmost extremities. Goldoni, whose fault was rather to have overcharged than spared the vices of society, described cicisbeism only as an absurd and troublesome code of etiquette, by no means interfering with the sanctity of private affections. The limits between the rights of the real and the mock husband, are clearly defined, and the shafts of the poet's humour are less frequently aimed at the heroic endurance of the former, than the servile submissiveness of the latter. Dutiful wives are represented as deeply impressed with the responsibility devolving upon them, from the implicit confidence of their lords. They start back with horror and disgust, whenever the assiduity of their servente assumes the character of impertinent courtship. Cicisbeism might afford opportunities, perhaps, even encouragement, but no sanction to vice.

Nevertheless, it was an imprudent, blameable custom; and we must be thankful to Heaven, that we have lived to see it universally discoun-

tenanced. The ridicule thrown upon its rites and institutions by Goldoni, had no little influence in that salutary revolution. But, more lately, cicisbeism gave way before the elaborate and bitter invective of the true-hearted patriot, Parini, whose galling satire, "Il Giorno," so forcibly contributed to rouse from their apathy the indolent Milanese nobility of sixty years since.

Nothing but the ungenerous prepossessions of ignorant travellers can detect even the traces of cicisbeism in Italy in our days. Degraded woman is not there, any more than anywhere else, a rare spectacle. But to say that vice is ostentatiously exhibited at Milan or Turin, free from all censure of public opinion; to say that a cicisbeo is still a *sine qua non* among the written articles of a marriage contract, must strike an Italian, to say the least, as an unwarrantable anachronism.

But between Goldoni's age and the present time, a most eventful period of years intervened. Goldoni left Italy in 1761, eight and twenty years before the French revolution. Even then, however, society was not altogether as bad as he painted it. His life was spent among actors and adventurers. His amours were with stage heroines; he had but rare opportunities of an intimate intercourse with the best classes.

Like one of our modern tourists, he travelled through, but had hardly leisure to inspect the world: he saw it through the glare of the stage lights. His heroes too often remind us of the green-room. Their faded lineaments are apparent through the meretricious varnish of their theatrical paint.

Neither was the poet's own character such as to raise him to the conception of a *beau-ideal* of moral worth. The sport of fortune during his lifetime, he had acquired all the apathy and recklessness of a confirmed fatalist. "All the world's a stage," was his device. As he gave little or no room to feeling in his bosom, so did he equally exclude it from his plays. He seemed to be born to laugh at the follies and miseries of mankind, and this he understood to be the sole and exclusive office of comedy.

Of this task he admirably acquitted himself. His fertile, inexhaustible, original humour; the rapidity and spontaneousness of his dialogue; the variety and eccentricity of his characters; his truly comic vein, stand unrivalled in Italy. He furnished the Italian theatre with more than one hundred and twenty comedies; which, together with a few written by his contemporary, the Marquis Albergati Capacelli, and those of his more recent imitators, the elegant, though rather cold and infecund Nota, the more staid,

but also more profound De Rossi, and the wild and oftentimes licentious Giraud, constitute the best models of what is now distinguished by the appellation of "Commedia di Carattere," the comedy of the genuine Italian school.

But the triumph of Goldoni has not been always equally assured. Even in the height of his success he met with a dangerous rival in Count Carlo Gozzi, a Venetian of bright inventive genius; one of those light-hearted patricians of the *Poco-curante* school, for whom literature and the fine arts were rather a pastime than a serious employment.

Provoked by some of Goldoni's indignant remarks, Gozzi, who had always regretted the downfal of the ancient national "Commedia dell' Arte," undertook to revive it before the very eyes of the reformer, who flattered himself to have banished it without return.

Selecting his subject from the fairy tales in which the Venetians delighted, the Count dazzled his audience with the exhibition of fantastic productions, in which the enchantments of the oriental genii, the thousand and one extravagances of the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments," were brought to the aid of the buffooneries of the ancient popular farces. The "Love of the Three Oranges," the "Blue Monster," the "Lady Bird," and other such outlandish

performances, operated an ephemeral reaction in favour of the old Italian school.

It was as if "Midsummer Night's Dream" had entered into competition with the "Merry Wives of Windsor." Goldoni, disheartened by what he called the blindness and ingratitude of his countrymen, embittered also by the personal attacks of his rival's satires, left Venice in disgust and despondency, and repaired to France, where new success attended him on a foreign stage.

He died at Paris, during the reign of terror, in 1793.

Gozzi, left master of the battle-field, did not, however, long enjoy his triumph. The charm attached to his magic performances, was broken when some of his best actors deserted him. His plays never reappeared either at Venice or any where else in Italy, and sank into utter oblivion, until they were recently resuscitated in Germany.

The "Commedia Goldoniana" having thus once more superseded the "Commedia dell' Arte," and prevailed against the "Fiabe" of Gozzi, equally succeeded, in later times, to drive from the stage the sentimental comedy, "Commedia Piagnolosa,"—derived from French and English romances of the worst school; the philosophical comedy, or "Commedia Morale,"

—consisting in apt illustrations of the *philanthropic* school of Voltaire and Rousseau; the "Commedia Romantica," imitated from the German, and filling the stage with horrors, with tears and groans; and finally the "Commedia d' Intrigo," of which Camillo Federici was the first master, and in which the protagonist is invariably a duke or an emperor travelling incognito, to surprise his ministers or his subjects *in flagrante delicto*, and performing the duties of an amateur police.

All these different schools have had their day. The Italians, who can patiently listen to the same opera for a whole season, betray an inexhaustible thirst for variety in the drama. No dramatic performance can go through more than three successive representations; and as the original "Repertorio" would be easily exhausted, poets and actors have recourse to frequent translations, especially from the French theatre. There is scarcely an example of any of Scribe's farces and vaudevilles rising into notoriety in Paris, without being forthwith "tradotte e ridotte" for the Italian stage.

The actor's trade in Italy, as well as the interests of the drama, in consequence of the all-absorbing prevalence of the opera, are in a very precarious condition. The few wandering companies, except such as are entertained by royal

patronage, are every day decreasing in number and importance, and some of them reduced to the last stage of penury. Dramatic poets would fare still worse, if there were any longer in Italy persons exclusively following that calling. I know of no instance, since the time of Goldoni, in which an author's labours received any better fees than the popular applause, which must be accepted as a pledge of the remuneration of posterity.

The great number of private theatricals, however, and the zeal of the *dilettanti* of every class, supply the deficiency of good companies: the talent of declamation is reckoned among the essential accomplishments of gentlemanly education.

The "Commedia dell' Arte" has found its last refuge in the little theatres of San Carlino in Naples, Girolamo in Turin, Stenterello in Florence, and other similar contrivances in every town. These formless and grotesque performances, generally in the popular dialects, though seldom written, and never printed, might afford considerable interest to foreign critics as specimens of a national amusement, which has survived every phasis of ancient and modern civilization.

As of all branches of literature the theatre is the one that most essentially belongs to the

nation, and admits least of foreign imitation; the Italians, after seeking for excitement in the works of French and German dramatists, after a few ephemeral aberrations of taste, have always reverted, and are sure unanimously and enthusiastically to return to their "gran Goldoni."

Italy has behaved towards her great comic poet, as Rosaura in his "Vedova Scaltra," who, after having flirted with English, French, and Spanish admirers, gives her preference to her less rich, less elegant, less ostentatious, but more warm-hearted Italian lover.

If Goldoni and the Italian comedy are still almost entirely unknown, Alfieri, though a more familiar name, can be hardly said to have been more justly appreciated abroad. Literature is the inalienable property of a nation. Language remains as a last moral barrier when every other natural or artificial line of demarcation is broken. A work of genius is the emanation of a whole age and country: it obeys the laws of national taste, which are perpetually fluctuating in accordance with local circumstances and social conventions. We cannot flatter ourselves to have fully appreciated the merits of a foreign work, until we have, by means of powerful abstraction, worked ourselves up to that state of feeling by which

the author was actuated, until we have raised ourselves to his level, and identified ourselves with him.

Down to the period of the French revolution, the chaste and symmetrical type of Greco-Latin classicism had established its absolute sway over Europe. Those were the days when Racine and Voltaire held an exclusive possession of the stage; when Addison's "Cato" was looked upon as the masterpiece of English tragedy.

Our age has witnessed a most astonishing reaction. The northern nations have asserted their independence in letters and arts, as they had long since in religion and politics; they have spurned the models before which they had been taught to bow in awe and veneration; they have set up their romantic school, and broken the fetters of what had certainly become an intolerable despotism of pedantry.

The Germanic element has gained such a universal ascendency, as to exert its sway even over those countries where classicism seemed indigenous. The Italians have in their turn become imitators; and, as such a state of things must appear to them novel and unnatural, their literature has fallen into that state of titubation and uncertainty which is perhaps only the consequence of a state of transition,

but which has been too hastily set down as absolute stagnation and irrevocable death.

But when we think of Alfieri, we must bring ourselves back to his age; we must for a moment enter into his classical views. Alfieri was in Italy the last of classics; and happy was it for that school, that it could, at its close, shed so dazzling a light as to shroud its downfal in his glory and trouble, for a long while, with jealous anxiety, the triumph of its hyperborean rival—the Romantic school.

When we number the greatest tragedian of Italy among the classics, we consider him only in regard to the form and style of his dramas, not to the spirit that dictated them. Properly speaking, he belonged to no school, and founded none. He stands by himself, the man of all ages, the man of no age. Whatever might be the shape which his education, or the antique cast of his genius, led him to prefer in his productions, no poet ever contributed more powerfully to the reformation of the character of his countrymen. For that object he only needed to throw before them the model of his own character. It mattered little whether it was drawn with the pencil, or carved with the chisel; whether it was wrapped up in the Roman gown of Brutus, or in the Florentine cassock of Raimondo de Pazzi.

Alfieri's character was an anomaly in his age. Notwithstanding some symptoms of boldness and energy of mind shown by some of his contemporaries, or his immediate predecessors, such as Giannone or Parini, still the regeneration of the Italian character was yet merely intellectual and individual; and Alfieri was born out of that class which was the last to feel its redeeming influence. He belonged to a nobility used to make day of night, and night of day; to divide their hours between the prince's antechamber and the boudoir of the reigning beauty; to waste their energies in a life of insolence, idleness, and unlawful excitement.

Alfieri's character is portrayed in his biography; two volumes written in a concise, vigorous, and disdainful style, such as Italy was not long since accustomed to. It is the most striking likeness that any artist ever left of himself.*

It was by a strange chance that Goldoni and

* Count Vittorio Alfieri da Asti, born Jan. 17, 1749; his first travels, 1767; settled at Turin, 1772—75. "Cleopatra," acted, 1776; "Saul," written, 1782; established in Paris with the Countess of Albany, 1787—1790; first edition of his works, 1790; wrote his memoirs, 1790; narrow escape from the French mob at Paris, 1792, Aug. 18; settled at Florence till his death; began his study of Greek, 1795; died October 8, 1803.

Alfieri have both in their memoirs unveiled to our curiosity the wonderful ways by which Heaven fitted them to their mission, revealing to the mind the secret working of the mind. The first taught us how the fancy of a comic poet is shaped; the last, how the soul of a tragedian is tempered.

The life of Alfieri is an eminently moral book; in so far, at least, as it represents a mind growing up, abandoned to itself, unknown, unconscious, stagnating in ignorance and inertia, almost to the end of youth, then roused all at once by a sudden start, and travelling on an untrodden path, with a confidence in his own forces, and with a firmness of purpose, which would be controlled by no obstacle.

Alfieri was left an orphan from his childhood. At the end of his minority he was thrown alone into the world, with a large fortune,—with no safeguard but the loose ideas of honour prevailing at the time, and a proud mind, that seemed, as if unaware, to aim at great undertakings, and panted for action in a different sphere of life.

Among his dissipations, a thought haunted him,—a vague regret for the time he had lost, an anxious longing for fame, which sickened him of his juvenile pleasures, and allowed him no rest.

Penetrated with the utter impossibility of distinguishing himself by immediate action in that age, Alfieri, like many other noblemen of his country, was forced to throw himself on the last resources of literature.

But he had lofty ideas of its duties and influence: he had exalted notions of the dignity of man,—an ardent, though a vague and exaggerated love of liberty, and of the manly virtues which it is wont to foster. He felt that of all branches of literature the theatre had the most immediate effect on the illiterate mass of the people. He invaded the stage. He drove from it Metastasio and his effeminate heroes. He substituted dramatic for melodic poetry; manly passions for enervate affections; ideas for sounds. He wished to effect upon his contemporaries, that revolution which his own soul had undergone: he wished to rouse them, to wake them from their long lethargy of servitude, to see them thinking, willing, striving, resisting.

To a man that wrote, actuated by such feelings, the mere form was nothing. It was only at the age of twenty-nine, that, tormented by that disease of noble minds, fame, and grounding his hopes on what he calls his "determined, obstinate, iron will," he formed the resolution to be a tragic poet; and began his poetical

career by resuming his long-abandoned studies from the very elements of grammar.

He had no dramatic models before him but Corneille and Racine, to which he added a very imperfect knowledge of the ancient classics. For Shakspeare he indeed evinced an indefinable admiration. He felt overawed by the extraordinary powers, but was deterred and distracted by the eccentric flights of that sovereign fancy. The day of Shakspeare had not yet dawned. The great crisis of Romanticism was not mature; nor was it in Alfieri's power to foresee it.

When the great political and literary catastrophe had finally arrived; when the Jacobine legions invaded every thing; when the Romantic taste gained ground around him, he knew nothing, heard nothing of it. Many years since he had retired from the stage of the world; his mission was fulfilled, and he hastened to immortality, unconscious of the storms that thickened around him.

We must look upon Alfieri, not as the predecessor or contemporary of Goëthe and Schiller, but as the successor of Racine and Metastasio. It is only with the prosy *tirades* of the former, and the honeyed *recitativi* of the latter, that the iron framework of the fierce *Astigiano* can be fairly compared.

With the exception of Maffei's "Merope," a gentle and correct, but still, in my opinion, languid performance, the French tragedians, when Alfieri appeared, were believed to have the entire possession of the stage. Alfieri took upon himself the task of dethroning them, and accomplished it. For that purpose, he chose to beat them at their own weapons. He forced his haughty, insubordinate nature into the fetters of classical rules, and carried them to a superstitious extreme: he made himself a rigid observer of dramatic unity, rejected all accessary ornament, all episodical incidents, and gave to the stage his drama, solemn and severe; a bare, single, rapid, intense exhibition of horror and pity, never allowing the interest to stray, the attention to flag, or the excitement to cool.

Alfieri forgot, or, perhaps, wilfully neglected the precept of Horace, "ut pictura poesis." He was a sculptor poet. Sculpture works for eternity; it seems to refuse itself to all ornament and variety; it is indifferent to local costumes and habits; it considers its figures in the abstract, independent of light and shade; but its powers are limited, its materials are stone, rigid and rough, unbending, unmalleable, colourless.

Alfieri's poetry was sculpture. His tragedies

are only a group of four or five statues; his characters are figures of marble, incorruptible, everlasting; but not flesh, nothing like flesh, having nothing of its freshness and hue.

He describes no scene. Those statues stand by themselves, isolated on their pedestals, on a vacant ideal stage, without back-ground, without contrast of landscape or scenery; all wrapped in their heroic mantles; all moving, breathing statues perhaps, still nothing but statues.

Wherever be the scene, whoever the hero, it is always the poet that speaks. It is always his noble, indomitable soul reproduced under various shapes; it is always one and the same object pursued under different points of view, but to which every other view is subservient. The struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed; the genii of good and evil have waged an eternal war in his scenes. Philip, Creon, Gomez, Appius, and Cosmo de Medici, can equally answer his purposes as the agents of crime. Don Carlos, Antigone, Perez, Icilius, and Don Garzia, are indifferently chosen to stand forth as the champions of virtue.

But Alfieri deals too freely in horrors and atrocities. The passions he seems to delight in are jealousy and revenge. An inexorable tormentor, he allows the heart not an instant of ease; he presses heavier and heavier upon

it; he severs fibre from fibre; he tears it asunder. An awful obscurity pervades the whole drama, and gives it all the sublimity of mysticism. Among the darkest conceptions of the human mind, there is nothing like his Philip of Spain. I remember to have risen from my seat after its performance, oppressed and exhausted, my eyes dizzy, my temples throbbing and aching.

But it would be an error to believe that Alfieri could not or did not attempt the most tender pathetic, that he could give no utterance to the softest emotions. I know of no model of conjugal love and solicitude to match his lovely Bianca de Pazzi. The meeting of Virginius and his family on the threshold of his house, has been written in tears—the tears of Alfieri; and such short, abrupt episodes, breaking on a sudden through that gloomy severity, as if to relieve us from our intense agitation, have all the refreshing effect of a summer shower.

But besides these fugitive passages, there is one at least among his tragedies in favour of which exception should be made, even in the general sentence that has been passed against Alfieri, by the partizans of Romanticism.

"Saul" is certainly no classical performance. The character of that first monarch of Israel

is not, indeed, a statue or bust, but as noble a picture as art could ever contrive. It is, in truth, the tallest and bravest of the warriors of the twelve tribes; a stately figure bent by age, and overcome by sorrow; the martyr of restless remorse; the victim of a relentless vengeance; the old oak pride of the forest, blasted by the lightning of Heaven.

It is an exquisite anatomy of melancholy; and the rapid intensity which it derives from its unity of action, adds not a little to its prompt and immediate effect.

The fame of Alfieri for a long while precluded the way to tragical writing in Italy. The style of his tragedies seemed equally to refuse itself to all imitation, and to discourage all spirit of innovation. His authority has been fatal to dramatic art.

Those fetters with which he was pleased to shackle his powerful imagination, would crush and palsy any intellect of a weaker frame, as Thersites would have been stifled under the armour of Achilles.

The followers of his school, Monti, who endeavoured to soften, and Foscolo, who strove to exaggerate the harshness and conciseness of their model, have equally perished in the attempt.

Alfieri did not, could not, in his age, supply Italy with a real model for tragedy.

But he had built an edifice of steel and adamant, on which the gratitude and veneration of his countrymen had written: "ALFIERI RAISED IT: BEWARE HOW YOU TOUCH IT!"

ITALY.

FIFTH PERIOD.—RECENT TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

NAPOLEON.

Reforms of the princes of the age of Leopold of Tuscany—Improved character of literature—Vico, Beccaria, etc.—State of men's minds at the epoch of the French invasion—A rapid view of events under the republican and imperial governments—State of literature under Napoleon—Monti, Foscolo, and Pindemonte—Botta.

THE princes into whose hands the destinies of Italy had been abandoned, by the ultimatum of Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1748, were all more or less equally employed in the promotion of public welfare.

Charles III. of Bourbon, at Naples, and the two brothers, Joseph II. of Austria, and Peter Leopold of Tuscany, with a disinterested and enlightened zeal laboured at a general amelioration in the condition of the people; and some

attempts were even made at a gradual reform of civil and religious institutions.

These salutary innovations, however, aimed no higher than at a universal increase and equitable distribution of material prosperity. Liberal encouragement was granted to agriculture, commerce and trade. Marshes were drained, roads opened, harbours cleared. Wisdom and clemency presided over the councils of those benevolent legislators. The well-being of the people was the avowed object of all their measures.

Only it may be permitted to inquire how far these reforms influenced the moral improvement of the Italian nation.

Our ancient republicans loved their institutions not so much in proportion to the amount of happiness and security which they afforded to the mass, as to the share that each individual was allowed to take in the sovereignty of the state. Liberty was for them rather an essential element of life, than a source of enjoyment. Public spirit was the main spring which determined all private exertion.

Freedom they understood to be the identification of every citizen with the state.

Hence patriotism gradually prevailed over love of liberty. Every one was vitally interested in the advancement of his country's

greatness and power, endangered his life and property, sacrificed his domestic comforts, and even submitted to vexatious and arbitrary laws, whenever the safety of the Republic seemed to require it.

In their eagerness to assert the supremacy of their native state, they acceded to the concentration of power into one or a few hands, and gave rise to the establishment of oligarchy and despotism.

But those patricians and tyrants still constituted the state; and although the sovereignty with which they had been provisionally invested, became, in their hands, oppressive and permanent, yet those national governments were looked upon with devotion and pride, as the emanation of popular will, and the depositaries of popular power.

On the other hand, the chiefs of the state assumed rather the ducal or imperial, than the royal power. Theirs was a military more than a civil government. They were the protectors and dictators of the Republic: and the municipal and jurisdictional authority was left in the hands of magistrates that still preserved the titles and insignia of republican times.

Hence the improvidence and inconsistency of those rulers who had to struggle against the privileges of every petty community, against

the remnants of feudal and ecclesiastical authority; and never had sufficient energy, or never deemed it wise and safe, to bring their states under a uniform system of civil organization.

But Italy had now passed under the rule of princes, on whom the sanction of all the powers of Europe seemed to have conferred the rights of undisputed legitimacy; who had no longer any occasion to fear, or any necessity to manage their subjects; for whom Louis XIV. of France, was the model of princes; for whom the utmost perfection of monarchical government consisted in an absolute equalization and centralization of powers.

Thus the innovations of Peter Leopold, and the princes his contemporaries—whatever may be said in their praise—only aimed at a thorough consolidation of despotism.

The measures by which the emperor, the grand duke, and the Bourbons, emancipated their states from the temporal control of the papal see; the emanation of a uniform code of laws; the abolition of private jurisdiction; the reforms introduced in the management of the public revenues—every decree they enacted, had, in fact, no other tendency than to bring the reins of the state exclusively, unconditionally, into their hands.

With the exception of his ruinous wars, they

had effected in Italy, in 1789, that revolution which Louis XIV. had accomplished in France nearly a century before.

The Italians were far from opposing this new order of things: in the first place, because they were long since accustomed to passive obedience; then, because they felt that their superannuated institutions, being no longer in keeping with their present circumstances, had become a real evil, and their suppression afforded at least a temporary relief; and also, because the reformers seemed really actuated by noble and generous motives; and power became, in their hands, an instrument of real good.

The monarch's throne was accessible to the meanest of his subjects. The prince himself visited incognito the humble dwelling of the poor. But the nation, as a body, was never consulted, never allowed to utter its grievances. One mind alone examined, foresaw, and provided. To the rest nothing was left but to enjoy, to applaud, and to bless.

There are nations to whom despotism, in the hands of a wise and clement sovereign, is the *ne plus ultra* of civil felicity.

But no royal beneficence can reconcile the Italians to an absolute master.

Under these pastoral governments, the people were better fed, more leniently and equi-

tably shorn; but they were, more than ever, brought to the condition of sheep.

But those whom loftiness of genius, or manliness of character, raised above the common level of the brutified multitude, among whom some sparks of the ancient republican spirit still survived, to whom the name of Italy conveyed vague, but glorious and imperishable reminiscences — did not, without reluctance, submit.

They hated their despots "et dona ferentes." They scorned to receive as a boon what they were entitled to claim as a right; and endured the present only as a stepping-stone to a new and a better order of things.

From the earliest beginning of the eighteenth century to the year 1789, intellectual life had advanced with rapid development. The debates of the Neapolitan, Tuscan, and Austrian governments with the papal see, had brought about the enfranchisement of science and literature. The suppression of the Jesuits had reawakened the ardour of the Italian universities, and given a new impulse to the activity of the press. The philanthropic measures of the royal reformers called forth the strictures of the learned. The theories of political and legislative administration were warmly, and, with the exception of Venice, to a certain extent, also freely discussed.

At Naples especially, where the study of law absorbed all capacities, the most cultivated minds were kept in a state of continual ferment.

There flourished in that city a school of profound, but daring philosophers, the descendants of Telesio and Campanella, engaged in such pursuits, as, by their gravity and abstruseness, might seem incompatible with the gaiety and voluptuousness of that gifted land, and the habitual lightheartedness of its inhabitants.

Even before Naples had been providentially freed from the yoke of Spanish and Austrian viceroys, there lived within its walls, inglorious and poor, but happily secure in his obscurity and indigence—the man to whom posterity awarded the proud title of the Dante of philosophy—Vico.

His mind was, in fact, framed after the model of the father of Italian poetry, from whose mystic cantos he had drawn the first elements of that vast and recondite knowledge, which seemed to harass and fatigue his understanding, like the fatidical inspiration which wrought within the soul of ancient prophets.

The bold and gigantic ideas by which Italian philosophy was finally emancipated from the doctrines of Cartesianism, and of which Vico had only sown the germs in his "Scienza Nuova," a work, lofty even to inaccessibility—

received full development in the writings of his successor—Genovesi.

Under the influence of this amiable philosopher, the abstractions of metaphysical inquiry were made subservient to the interests of the state. Genovesi himself occupied the chair of political economy, which had been first opened in Naples, by private munificence, in 1754. Twelve years later, a similar institution was founded at Milan; and the title of professor of economical sciences was given to a still greater man—Cesare Beccaria.

The name of Beccaria was already well known throughout Europe, as that of the reformer of criminal legislation. He was the greatest of a large number of champions of humanity, who had established themselves at Milan under the patronage or tolerance of the Count of Firmian, the lieutenant of Maria Theresa and her son; and who were rapidly undermining the ancient edifice that had been long miscalled social order in Italy.

The remains of feudal barbarism, rendered still more grievous and intolerable at Milan and Naples during the long period of Spanish oppression, gave way before the arguments of the Milanese benefactor of mankind.

At Naples, meanwhile, Gaetano Filangieri, like Beccaria, a man of the highest descent,

undertook, by a more vast and deliberate attack, the final demolition of the oppressive privileges of that class to which he belonged.

The treatise "Dei Delitti e delle Pene," and the "Scienza della Legislazione," made the Italians aware of the want they stood in of a total reorganization of society.

The activity of men's minds had received an impulse which no effort of absolutism could arrest. Amazed and terrified as they were by the diffusion of these new doctrines, the Italian princes could not stem the current to which their beneficial reforms had given the first start.

Pope Boniface XIV. interfered in behalf of Genovesi, who had been traduced before the Inquisition at Naples under charge of heresy, and raised the interdict from his works. The court of Ferdinand IV. sheltered Filangieri from the animadversions of the Neapolitan nobility. His works, and those of Beccaria, were published at Leghorn, under sanction of Peter Leopold, bearing, however, false date of Philadelphia; and though at Venice those writings were proscribed under capital punishment, still such measures were rather the result of inveterate habits, than of any hope that that decrepit and imbecile government entertained of resisting the new light that

dawned over Italy, or of retarding its impending fate.

Every where this love of positive and practical studies superseded the idle and emasculate literature that the Jesuits had long propagated and fostered. Every branch of knowledge was forcibly directed to one scope—the regeneration of the Italian mind.

The Italians began to be ashamed of the poetry of their Arcadian swains. The crackings of Baretti's formidable whip, "Frusta Letteraria," scared those trifling warblers from their academical groves. The wanton attacks of the ex-Jesuit Bettinelli on Dante had the effect of reawakening the enthusiasm of the Italians for the memory of their much-injured bard. Gasparo Gozzi first gathered Bettinelli's gauntlet, and, after his example, Dante found numberless propugners and disciples.

A manly and truly Dantesque style of poetry revived in the "Visions" of the noble Varano, and, not long afterwards, in the verses of Cesarotti and Monti, who, whatever may be said of the pedanting presumption of the first, and of the more than versatile character of the last, announced, by their "Ossian" and "Pellegrino Apostolico," a new era of Italian versification.

Still the poets, whose strains better harmonized with the spirit of the times, were the

sterile and chastened, but severe Parini and Alfieri.

The influence of the tragedies of this last on the minds of his contemporaries, was by itself equal to a complete revolution. Those verses, barren and unimaginative as they are said to be, seemed to engrave themselves in the Italian hearts irresistibly, indelibly.

Alfieri provided his countrymen with the war-music that was to cheer and support them during the long, and, as yet, unsuccessful struggle, that has hitherto cost them many tears, and is likely to cost them still more blood, but which must eventually lead them to be worthy of their name.

Thus the germs of a moral regeneration had been sown in Italy, without the immediate interference of foreign invaders. Had the mental progress, to which Vico, Beccaria, Filangieri and Alfieri, were leading the way, been suffered to proceed unhurried and unimpeded, the transition from thought to action would have been slower, perhaps, but more deliberate and unanimous.

The royal reformers, who had acted thus far only under the influence of their arbitrary impulse, would either have been made aware of the necessity of the co-operation of their subjects, or would have succumbed in their at-

tempt to check, or force back the train of social movement.

The Italian philosophers were builders. The task assigned to them by Providence was by far the noblest. They were the real benefactors of their race: but human curiosity is only attracted where the trampling of horses and the clashing of steel bewilder the terrified imagination. The progress of mankind is only marked by works of destruction, as the history of the earth they inhabit is traced by floods and earthquakes.

Italian constructiveness was soon to give way before French destructiveness.

A nation in modern times could no longer proceed in its course, without a more or less direct influence of the ideas prevailing in other countries. Indeed, it is but fair to avow, that the results which intellectual life had attained in Italy before 1789, were partly due to the dissemination of foreign doctrines.

The splendour to which French literature had risen in the golden age of Louis XIV., in the very period when literature in Italy was at its lowest ebb, had placed that country in a state of mental dependence on its more fortunate rival, from which the efforts of the new schools of Neapolitan and Milanese philosophers could only gradually emancipate it.

The doctrines of Voltaire and Rousseau, though received with awe and mistrust, though occasionally refuted with vigour and ability, still had a dazzling effect on minds that had but lately shaken off the ignominious yoke of the Jesuits.

Before the Italians had rid themselves of this state of wardship towards France, they were involved in its ruin.

Had the French proceeded no farther than the convocation of the states-general, and the demolition of the Bastile; had the patriots of 1789, and not the regicides of 1793, marched to the conquest of Italy, there is but little doubt that their invasion would have been unanimously countenanced.

The Italian governments relied rather on the acquiescence, than the support of their subjects. They had bestowed on their people the blessings, but exempted them from the cares of their paternal government. They had provided for the common welfare, but with the total extinction of public spirit. When the hour of danger arose, they perceived that the defence of the state devolved entirely on their hands.

Their pampered, but mute and dastardly slaves, looked on their master's and their country's forthcoming ruin, as unconcerned

as if their interference had been illegal and treasonable.

As their rulers had never exacted from them any other proofs of loyalty and devotion than plaudits and blessings, so no other demonstration of fidelity accompanied them in their flight, than a sterile sympathy and unavailing regrets.

The well-meaning Joseph II., and Peter Leopold, had died ere the storm gathered upon them, in 1790; and their unwise successors, terrified by the first announcement of a still remote danger, had suspended the reforms which the most enlightened of their subjects already began to consider as insufficient and trifling. In proportion as they lost popularity, those governments adopted new measures, more vexatious and hostile.

The mass continued brutally silent and neutral; but wherever there was mind, the republican innovators found open abettors and auxiliaries.

Unfortunately, the French did all in their power to disgrace and contaminate the cause of liberty.

The upright and pious in Italy shuddered at the report of that long reign of madness and crime. They beheld with amazement their apostle of liberty, Alfieri, who had pur-

chased his personal independence with the sacrifice of rank and wealth—Alfieri, profoundly grieved at seeing the name of freedom profaned by the demagogues of the *sans-culottic* school, revolted at the atrocities of what he called "a nation of half tigers, half monkeys," and obliged to fight his own way through the mob-besieged gates of their distracted metropolis.

Their alarm, however, did not bring the Italians back to their allegiance. Those who had despaired of the cause of freedom, drew their cloak around them, equally refusing to be the supporters of despotism, and the promoters of licentiousness.

Meanwhile the republicans drew near.

The Italian governments—with the exception of Piedmont, where the drilling and drumming Prussian system of military rule had engendered a soldierly if not a warlike spirit—unarmed and unprotected, rallied around the Austrian standard, only to fall with that power. Venice and Genoa had recourse to their pusillanimous neutrality, which hastened their ruin.

The defence was inefficient and short.

Notwithstanding the inaction and apathy of the best part of Italian patriots, who were calmly awaiting events, there were still rash

and daring innovators, in sufficient number, to allow their rulers no rest.

While his unwilling soldiers were disputing the passes of the Alps with indifferent success, the King of Sardinia was harassed by insurrections in his provinces, and threatened by conspiracies in his capital. The King of the Two Sicilies, who had exhausted his finances to prepare an armament, destined to join the allies in the north, beset by dangers at home, was forced to suspend his hostilities until resistance could no longer avail him.

Revolt and treason were visited with awful punishments at Turin and Naples. But the very severity of these governmental measures added fresh exasperation to the general discontent. The Italians perceived that despotism could have its reign of terror no less than Jacobinism.

Fortune, in the meantime, declared in favour of the brave. Those who had not been seduced by the specious doctrines, were dazzled by the splendid success, of the French. It was fated also that the conquering legions were led by two heroes, belonging by birth to the invaded country—Massena and Bonaparte.

This last, it is true, has been by the French repeatedly claimed and abjured according to the tide of popular fanaticism. The Italians,

suffered more than any other nation, from the ambition of the fatal man: they murmured, conspired, rose against him, but never refused to acknowledge the Corsican as their own.

He bore then in his pale, emaciated aspect in his eagle eye, in his flowing hair, all the characteristic features of an Italian countenance. His juvenile enthusiasm, the vastness of his mind, were eminently the gift of the happy climate that gave him birth. The land of his fathers was also the theatre of his first exploits, the instrument of his rise. Never did Napoleon look more like an Italian, than at Lodi or Arcolo.

His genius seemed to catch fire under the rays of an Italian sun. Like Antheus, he rose with a redoubled vigour whenever he touched the soil of his father-land.

Bonaparte appeared and conquered. Innumerable volunteers and deserters joined the tricolour standard. Reggio, Bologna, Bergamo, Brescia, nearly all Lombardy, ran to meet the invader. Every where popular insurrection favoured and determined the conquest.

The vanquished governments purchased a precarious and ignominious peace, at an exorbitant rate, in vain. Before the end of two years, the French had accomplished the deliverance of Italy.

The Italians paid dearly for their ransom. The whole wealth of the country could not satisfy the rapacity of their liberators. The noblest monuments of Italian valour and genius, were taken from their cities: that nation of artists was wounded in the most sensitive part.

Yet they endured and hoped They thought that no reward could fully atone for the blood their deliverers had shed for their cause. They knew that liberty could be purchased only by immense sacrifices; that great calamities are inseparable from so total a subversion of the established order of things.

They suffered and believed. They enlisted in the ranks of the French victors; they sat in the debates of their republican councils; they voted for the election of their magistrates. The days of public life had returned!

A sudden reaction was, however, at hand. Bonaparte sailed for Egypt. The tide of fortune was turned in favour of the allies. The lowest classes, who had been rather amazed than seduced by the specious arguments of Jacobinism; who had furiously, though unsuccessfully attempted to oppose the progress of the French at Binasco and Pavia, at Verona, Lugo and Naples,—now inflamed by their priests, and headed by Austrians and Russians in the

north, and by the English in the south, arose in arms for the altar and throne.

Awful calamities ensued. Deserted by the French, overcome by numbers, betrayed by a shameless breach of capitulation, the Italian republicans fell victims to an insane and cowardly vengeance. Men of the brightest talents, of the purest morals, Tenivelli, Cirillo, Mario Pagano, Caracciolo, and a hundred others, perished on the scaffold. The dungeons groaned with victims. Fugitives died of want abroad.

Presently Napoleon reappeared on the Alps. A legion of Italian exiles marched as his vanguard. Marengo was fought. Once more French liberty prevailed.

Soon the French grew weary of their liberty. They invested the Corsican hero with unlimited powers. The first consul of the French became president of the Italian republic. The Emperor of France was crowned with the iron crown of the kingdom of Italy.

The spell of republican illusion was broken. But the no less potent charm attached to political and military activity, had increased with the extinction of liberty. A large part of the country, Piedmont, Parma, Tuscany, and Rome, was made an integrant part of the French territory. Naples had been given to a soldier

of fortune. Lombardy alone preserved the name, and only the name, of Italy.

Still that name, at least, was mentioned. For the first time after the fall of the Roman empire, the Italians were made aware that they had a country. An Italian standard was raised; Napoleon instituted an Italian senate, an army, a navy, an order of knighthood. Eminent men from every province, hitherto strangers to each other, met as brothers at Milan. Lombard and Piedmontese regiments rivalled the valour of their masters on the battle-field. Lahoz, Pino, Lecchi, and others, ranked among Napoleon's best generals. The leader of leaders himself, they believed, was an Italian. As long as France endured a Corsican on its throne, Italy could hardly consider itself under a foreign prince.

Meanwhile, the downfal of the ancient governments had brought about the cessation of grievous abuses. The petty divisions of the old Italian states had disappeared. Though still nominally tripartite, Italy, for all commercial and intellectual purposes, was one. The efforts of a strong and unswerving despotism, brought the country under a uniform plan of administration. The cloisters had been broken open, and an end put to the influence of priestly craft. The pope himself was dragged

an exile and prisoner to France. Confusion and apostasy had dispersed the ranks of his supporters.

The slow and imperfect reforms which the Italian princes had timidly commenced, were carried on with all the earnestness and solicitude of a government, to whose ends all means were made subservient. It is impossible to conceive how greatly the arts of peace were promoted in those warlike times. Commerce and agriculture never presented more glorious results. The union of the country had demonstrated its inexhaustibleness.

The roads across the Alps and Apennines, the suppression of monasteries, and the code of Napoleon, were sufficient to indemnify the Italians for the severe calamities they had to endure.

But among that nation, the name of republic was associated with every idea of greatness and power. Their enthusiasm for Napoleon decreased in proportion as he advanced towards the attainment of the supreme power.

He appeared in their eyes, as it has been very aptly observed, little better than one of their ancient condottieri on a gigantic scale; and as if to render his yoke yet more insupportable, he employed foreign arms for the subjugation of their country, relied on a foreign

nation for the accomplishment of his ambitious schemes, abjured and mistrusted his countrymen, and seemed to be ashamed of his Italian name.

The presumptuous and scornful manners of his lieutenant, Beauharnois, who had not even equal claims to their admiration, afforded more ample cause for universal malcontent.

The French government became the butt of the attacks of patriotic writers. Insurrections broke forth in the wildest districts of the Apennines. Even in his metropolis, Napoleon found himself beset by Italian and Corsican conspirators.

Had the Emperor peacefully endured on his throne, the day was perhaps at hand, when Italy would have risen against him, and asserted its independence.

Before that day arose, Napoleon had tempted Providence, and consummated his ruin. So rapid, so amazing, was his downfal, as to bring confusion and dismay among his adversaries as well as his friends. The allies took advantage of that instant of universal perplexity, to forward their claims over Italy. Deception and force, consternation and lassitude, had already prepared the Italians to submission.

That period of twenty years had been to

them like a feverish dream. They awoke only to find themselves the slaves of Austria.

The republican and imperial governments have been justly considered as favourable to the progress of science and literature.

From their first invasion the French had contrived to enlist all men of eminence and ability in their cause. All the publicists who had by their writings anticipated, or hastened the revolution; the disciples of the school of Beccaria and Verri at Milan,—of Genovesi and Filangieri at Naples; poets, historians, physicians, astronomers,—all were called to grace Napoleon's retinue. Never had Italy been supposed to possess so many men of genius, as were now seen in a crowd at Milan or Pavia.

Truly, many of them either incurred the displeasure of their imperious patron, by their independent demeanour, or retired from court in the bitterness of disappointment. Still never, or very seldom, was any distinguished personage induced to pass over to Austria. None but the lowest classes ever declared in favour of that power.

The engineer, Fontana; the greatest of Italian anatomists, Scarpa; Oriani, the astronomer; Galvani and Volta, unrivalled names in natural sciences; the last of classic artists in

Italy, Canova; and all, in fine, to whom modern science is most indebted, were strongly attached to the republican name, and reluctantly submitted to Napoleon's despotism; and though some of them continued after the restoration to receive pensions from Austria, still they seemed to feel the paralyzing influence of that torpid government, and ended their lives in comparative obscurity.

Still, it would be impossible that the startling events of that brilliant era had not seduced or deterred literary men from their contemplative life. As soon as the hour of action had come, society was divided into injurers and sufferers. The bold ranged themselves into the lists, as actors; the timid stood appalled and silent aside, as spectators. None were free from hope or fear; hence few had courage or leisure to write.

All was involved in the general vertigo, until the rage of the elements abated. Italian literature underwent a temporary intermission; poets and scholars were transformed into warriors and statesmen.

We have seen that Italian literature had obeyed French influence, even before the revolution. But, after the invasion, mental dependence became even more fatal to Italy, than political bondage.

The Italian language was corrupted in its

very sources; at Turin, Parma, and Rome, as departments of the French empire, it was officially proscribed. The Tuscans alone, in regard to the purity of their accent, were suffered to make use of their national language. Whilst in every branch of useful knowledge the Italians endeavoured to follow, or rival their transalpine masters, polite literature was threatened with imminent ruin.

Cesarotti, Parini, and the other poets of the preceding generation, were setting in silence; the first in his retirement at Padua, after having propitiated the favour of the Corsican conqueror, by his venal muse; the last, bearing his disenchanted hopes, and vain indignation, into his forgotten grave.

The general attention was then shared among three contemporaries of different manners and tastes; characteristic geniuses destined to represent the opposite parties into which the Italians, in the alternation of so many vicissitudes, were compelled to range themselves—Monti, Foscolo, and Pindemonte.

The first had arrived, unbidden and unwelcome, from the court of Pius VI., deserting the papal standards with a most flagrant apostasy; and had brought into the republican mart those very verses which he had hitherto prostituted to the opposite cause.

Surrounded with honours and influence; respected, though mistrusted and closely watched by the several governments to which, with equal eagerness, he successfully proffered his services; well known as a formidable enemy, but a faithless friend—he had contrived to overpower all feelings of shame, and seemed to style himself openly "the poet of the times; the constant friend of the conqueror."

He had weathered the most tremendous storms, with rare ability, during the republican and imperial drama; and when the curtain fell—when, after the restitution of peace, letters began to regain their ascendency, he might be seen at Milan, in the midst of a crowd of young poets and old pedants, the sovereign arbiter of literature, still hale and vigorous, though his hazel hair was besprinkled with the frosts of age; with the animated brow, the radiant and winning smile of a courtier poet.

The second, Ugo Foscolo, clad in the green uniform of a Cisalpine officer, with a dark, menacing countenance, disfigured by a large volume of hair and whiskers, with the marks of wild, dangerous passions in every feature;

"Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,"—

like Ajax, the hero of one of his tragedies.

Foscolo, a soldier, a poet, an austere patriot, a victim of his own violence—hesitating all his life-time between exile and the dagger of Ortis; Foscolo, driven from Venice by the Austrians; from Milan, Brescia, and Pavia, by the French; addressing the first consul in the language of Brutus; alone refusing his homage to the throne before which monarchs bowed and trembled; applauding the emancipation of his country from the French yoke, only to behold the establishment of a more lasting and irksome despotism; and preparing himself for the miseries of solitude and poverty that awaited him in the land of exile.

The last, a soft, colourless face, with a deep, serene eye, a delicate frame; downcast, pensive, and sad—Pindemonte; seldom venturing far from his rural abode—a harmless spectator, hating no man, revered by all parties, secure in his integrity, in his unenvied obscurity.

Such were the poets who flourished in the times of Napoleon; but their influence was only felt among the youths of the following generation.

Bred up with classic taste; occupied in translations of Homer; influenced by the reigning authority of the genius of Alfieri, but early brought into the midst of the innovating activity of a revolutionary age; obeying almost uncon-

sciously the general current of thought, and naturally placed at the head of the intellectual movement—those three poets were destined to constitute the link between the established theories and the invading ideas—between Classicism and Romanticism.

All of them were warmly interested in the restoration of Dante, in the yindication and emancipation of the national language: all of them contributed to give a truly Italian character to the literature of their contemporaries.

Monti, the most able reviver of the Ghibeline poet, the greatest master of style, perhaps, after him, had all of Dante excepting his soul. That rich, pompous dress, that ever-rolling majesty; that dazzling vividness of colouring was found, at length, to cover only barrenness and shallowness, only ashes and smoke. It was found that his inventive powers were limited; his images vague and undefined. A total absence of principle, an entire want of faith and conviction, soon broke the spell of that borrowed grandiloquence. The active minds, the generous, the confident, spurned the wanton seduction, and the reign of Monti was over.

Foscolo, like Alfieri, rather a great soul than a powerful mind, mastering men and events, mastered by his passions, in a perpetual struggle with himself, reining his imagination, and pa-

ralyzing his forces, only showed that he was a genius, without fulfilling the true mission of a genius.

He dived into the most sanguine illusions of the times; writing and fighting; roving and raving; loving much and hating much more; but he displayed no taste or aptitude, or had no leisure for the pursuit of a regular course of ideas.

Satisfied with having won the favours of fame by a short courtship of four hundred lines, with having poured out his soul in the pages of his Venetian hero, the author of "I Sepolcri," and "Jacopo Ortis," sank in disappointment and inaction to die in distress and bitterness of heart. Sometimes, in his inordinate love of erudition, he would make a show of his classical lore, with almost puerile vanity; sometimes he would toil with a deplorable perseverance at the mechanic construction of a few lines, which afterwards, in utter exhaustion, he left unachieved.

Pindemonte, the master of the gentle and delicate feelings, the high-priest of melancholy —of a sweet, all-endearing melancholy, giving heart and voice to the whole kingdom of nature, a man of innocence and forbearance, was not in unison with the unsettled period in which he was destined to live.

Fifty years earlier he might have raised and

ennobled—fifty years later he might have assuaged and consoled, his countrymen; but in that raging effervescence—in that ebbing and heaving of passions, his voice could not make itself audible, any more than a cry of distress in the roar of the ocean—any more than the strain of the lark in the din of a hurricane.

Thus, with the highest qualifications, each of the three poets of the times of Napoleon, failed in gaining for himself the title of the bard of the age. The first discredited by a cowardly connivance; the second exhausted in a desperate struggle; the third cast into the shade by a harmless, but pusillanimous neutrality.

Monti wanted the dignity, Foscolo the calmness, Pindemonte the energy of a really superior mind.

By the side of the three poets must be placed the historian of the revolution—the Guicciardini of modern times—Botta.

"Proposing to write," he said at the beginning of the first book, "the history of events that took place in Italy in our days, I know not what the people of the present age will say of me."

Botta showed by these words, that he was aware of all the dangers attendant on his enterprise of writing contemporaneous history.

The judgment of his contemporaries did, in fact, bear harshly against him. His works were the object of virulent attacks; and the repose of his last years was disturbed by the animosities he had raised.

But now Botta is dead, and we, his survivors, his earliest posterity, have a right to constitute ourselves his judges, and review the sentence that party spirit has passed against him.

It is not difficult to vindicate his fame against all charges of venality. The indigence and exile that were his portion after the fall of Napoleon, are sufficient evidence against such ungenerous accusations. Equally reviled by all factions, he was sold to no faction. Those who have seen him in his humble dwelling in France, who knew on what means he depended for his sustenance, must confess that, had he ever sold himself, he must have made, to say the least, a very losing bargain.

Nor is the charge of ingratitude towards the memory of Napoleon, better founded.

Botta was, at different intervals, a physician in the French armies, a deputy from his native district, a president of a scientific institute in France. He never attracted the personal attention of the great conqueror except in the last years of his reign. With his great talent for judging of men, and availing himself of their

abilities, Napoleon employed Botta within his natural sphere, and conferred on him no favour from which he did not expect to derive equal advantages for the state.

Botta was then bound to Napoleon's memory by no feelings that could prevent him from writing; nor could he, while writing, be hindered by any personal feelings from declaring what he deemed to be truth.

Botta was a patriotic historian. At the moment he began his narration, he had just awakened from a dear illusion, in which all the best friends of Italy had equally shared, and wished to leave in his history a warning to his countrymen against future deception.

He had finally perceived that the Austrians, though in the end successful, were not the most formidable enemies of the independence of his country; that the antipathy of all Italians, and especially the Lombards, against them, needed no further exasperation; that no time, no mildness, no soothing manners, could ever reconcile the vanquished to the victors.

Sure on that ground, he saw, on the other hand, that, notwithstanding recent disappointment, the eyes of all Utopians were still turned towards France for their rescue, and *Gallomania* was still, to many minds, synonymous with patriotism.

He saw this, and, by a heart-rending picture of the horrors he had witnessed, he desired to impress upon his contemporaries that hard, but salutary lesson, which forms almost the conclusion to all his chapters, and so often recurs in the same words: "that English and French, Austrians and Russians, were equally the sworn enemies of unfortunate Italy; that there is no deception, no treachery, no ravage, she had no reason to expect from all these powers; and that to rely upon foreign aid for her emancipation, could lead to no better results than a change of masters."

A holy lesson this, and a prophetic warning!

But at the moment it was given, the effervescence of men's minds was too great to allow calm judgment the exercise of its functions. The recent remembrance of the military despotism of Napoleon, still dazzled the fancy with all the *prestige* of glory. The dull and deathlike yoke of the Austrians made a sad contrast to the activity and liveliness of the French dominion. The name of Italy was as yet imperfectly understood. The patriotic ranks were principally filled by malcontents from the Cisalpine assemblies, or from the French armies; Jacobins, royalists, constitutionalists—opposite elements, cast together by common reverses, and used to call themselves French—to speak and

think French; raising, in the secresy of their homes, shrines to the memory of the "man of destiny;" looking towards St. Helena as they had looked towards Elba, for a new rising of "the star," some of them refusing all belief to the tidings of the death of the "sultan of death."

To such a set of warm and heroic believers, no wonder if the History of Botta sounded like calumny and blasphemy; and no wonder also, if, after so many experiments, the Italian patriots of 1820 and 1831, resting on the fair promises of France, and plunging still into the same illusions, had the same calamities to deplore.

It is difficult, however, to determine how far the end can justify the means; and few would take upon themselves to affirm that, in pursuance of his own views, Botta has not, in many circumstances, palliated or exaggerated the truth, making the best of an epoch, in which an impudent system of lying in all official bulletins and newspapers, had involved truth in a maze of perplexity.

He has, for instance, too far and too often exalted the valour of the ever-beaten warriors of Austria. He has too generally ascribed to chance the brilliant successes of the French. He has overrated the wisdom and mildness of

the old governments, and underrated the talents and uprightness of the new ones.

But, above all, the desire of giving his History the dark hues of Macchiavello and Guicciardini, as he gave his style their turn and manner, has made him extravagant in his exhibition of human simulation and perfidy. He has put before his eyes a smoked glass, and all around him looks dark and pale. Society is for him a den of wild beasts.

Botta is a virtuous writer, but no believer in virtue. He is a patriot, but he has despaired of his country. A lover of good, but a prophet of evil. He revolts his reader with a faithful exhibition and a strong execration of baseness and crime; but he disheartens him by the conviction of their constant prosperity. There may be a dolorous truth in his doctrines, but we do not see to what they can lead but misanthropy and suicide.

Truly this cold scepticism of despair was but too general among those who were either actors or spectators of the late European convulsions. Ashamed of their extreme credulity, they shut their hearts against all further belief. Like Brutus at Philippi, they thought that virtue was only an illusion, an empty name. Foscolo, in his "Jacopo Ortis," had given the model of an Italian patriot of the old school. Botta,

with his sneering syllogisms, laughed hope out of countenance.

But shall there be no refuge against evil, except suicide or indifference? Shall virtue find no supporters, because its former champions perished in fight? Shall Italy never be independent, because the patriots of 1814, were discordant and unfortunate? „

No! God commands us to follow the impulse of conscience; to toil and struggle, unmindful of the results of our efforts. The ultimate success rests entirely in his hands; and he knows how to turn our very reverses to the accomplishment of his unerring judgments.

CHAPTER II.

STATE OF THE COUNTRY AFTER 1814.

The restoration—First rise of Italian nationality—Insurrections of 1820 and 1831—First attempts at establishing literary unity—Hopes and intentions of the Italian patriots.

THE sacrifice of Italy was consummated. On that country the revolution had inflicted its most dire calamities,—on that country the restoration imposed its hardest conditions.

Of all that Napoleon had done, only the work of destruction was sanctioned. Austria, Sardinia, and the Bourbons, the pope and the Jesuits, returned; but Genoa, Venice, and Lucca, had ceased to exist. The unity of commercial and legislative administration, the uniformity of weight, coin, and measure, were abolished; but the prefecture of the police, the censorship of the press extended to political

matters, the military conscription, and other heinous, but oftentimes unavoidable measures, for which the government of the usurper had been held up to the execration of nations, were brought to perfection, and became permanent evils.

The philanthropic reforms of Joseph II. and Peter Leopold, met with no less disregard than the incendiary decrees of the revolution. Italy was to be brought as far back towards barbarism as the ingenuity of tyranny could contrive.

The Italian governments, especially the courts of Naples and Turin, exiled to their islands of Sardinia and Sicily, had played but an indifferent part in the events that brought about their restoration. They owed their success, under Providence, to the exertions of Austria; and that power omitted no occasion to impress them with the conviction, that they depended solely on its support for their very existence. The rulers of the largest, as well as smallest states, the pope himself not excluded, notwithstanding all the *prestige* of his spiritual authority, needed the protection of Austrian bayonets, and held their nominally independent sovereignties under a secret compact of unqualified vassalage.

Thus, the last show of resistance that papal ascendency, and Venetian and Genoese policy,

still opposed to foreign ambition, was overcome by Napoleon. The victors of Napoleon scrupled not to profit by the political crimes on which that fatal hero had based his throne.

Henceforth, not only the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom, but the whole of Italy, was but an Austrian province. All and each of those sceptred lieutenants were compelled, within their own territories, to shorten or slacken their reins according to the mandates of the leading power; and, by an extreme refinement of policy, they were made to bear the odium of its recondite measures.

Italy was thus, in fact, under one absolute rule; whilst the confines of her petty states, their different laws and regulations, created a hundred paltry local interests, raising perpetual barriers against all hopes of future regeneration.

By a strange combination of adversities, Italy had thus one and eight masters, uniting all the evils of division, and all the disadvantages of union.

But whilst, in a political point of view, all that still remained of ancient Italy had thus definitely come to an end, the moral character of the nation was gradually developed.

The Italians had been made to think of their country. That fond, and hitherto mis-

directed patriotism, that had attached them to their native town or state, with all the narrow-mindedness of provincial prejudice, had now no longer any living object to cling to. Not a standard, not an emblem, not a name.

Nothing remained but the annals of the past, big with ominous lessons for the future.

They felt that their ancient republics had successively fallen only because they had never been true to each other; because each of them hoped to survive alone—to escape its doom by abandoning, sometimes even by pointing out their natural allies and brothers to the ambition of a common enemy; because Venice had stood a neutral spectator of the downfal of Florence, as both had impassively looked on the enslavement of Milan.

It was only when the last day had come for them all, that the deplorable illusion vanished. On its very supreme moments, Venice was still dreaming of its imperishableness.

But after 1798, all local interests had merged into one national interest. The Italians had now no country, or only one country. The destinies of each state depended on the fate of all others. They could only be, or not be together. Henceforth their cry was: INDEPENDENCE AND UNITY.

From the first moment that the Lombard

and Venetian patriots perceived by what deeds of rapine and violence the French Jacobins repaid them for the efforts by which they had facilitated their conquest, the first sect of Italian *Independents* arose. They were known by the name of the "Ligue Noire," to the French, who dreaded and hated, and left nothing unattempted to exterminate them. That league, nevertheless, continued to thrive and increase during the whole period of the occupation of the French; and had no slight influence in bringing about their expulsion.

It numbered among its members, besides many true and intelligent patriots, not a few secret friends of the ancient governments, and zealous defenders of the trampled religion of the country. It indiscriminately enlisted in its ranks the malcontents of all parties. But, although arising from heterogeneous elements, it was bound to a common work, and manifested a common tendency—the emancipation of Italy from foreign bondage.

That sect received a more determined organization, and proceeded with more deliberate views, in the kingdom of Naples, where, towards the year 1811, a few of the warmest patriots had given rise to the association of the *Carbonari*, and sought among the primitive race of the Apennines, the elements of Italian nationality.

Their first attacks were directed against the immediate oppression of the French and Napoleon; and because the overwhelming power and ascending fortune of France gave them but little chance of success, they lent a willing ear to the suggestions of the allies, and, in an evil hour, espoused their cause.

Meanwhile, the fall of Napoleon was at hand. There were few men in Italy who did not hope, none who did not wish for independence. Unfortunately, they did not agree as to the most expedient means of obtaining it. The disasters of the Spanish and Russian campaigns had thinned the ranks of the army of Italy. The flower of the Italian youth had perished abroad, fighting for the enemy's cause. The country lay exhausted and weary. It dreaded the renovation of the calamities of war it had so long endured. The allied powers, that had proved too strong for the whole might of a colossal empire, they thought, could not easily be resisted by a few disarmed, and, as yet, disunited provinces.

Perhaps they could rather be propitiated.

Those same allies, in fact, were lavish of the most splendid promises. The standard of Italian independence and union was seen waving at the head of their armies. The enfranchisement of Italy formed the text of all

their proclamations. The Carbonari marched at their vanguard. Eugène and Murat on the one side; Bentinck and Bellegarde on the other equally announced themselves as the sworn champions of Italy.

The patriots did not, perhaps, all equally plunge into the illusion. But perplexity and discord reigned among them; and before they could come to a close of those hasty and tumultuous deliberations, the fate of the country was sealed.

But now, it might be expected, even the last shade of delusion had vanished. The engagements of the allied sovereigns were, of course, null, as soon as their object was attained. The restorers of peace were determined to maintain it at every cost. Whosoever attempted to endanger the public tranquillity, even by the vindication of the most sacred rights, declared war to them all. The Italians had, therefore, nothing to hope, and every thing to fear from abroad. An Italian insurrection was the signal of a European war.

Twenty millions of men, no doubt, would be equal even to that task; but before engaging in such an undertaking, the patriots must be sure they could rely on a nation of men. Nothing should be attempted until, by a general regeneration of the national character,

a race of slaves was raised to the dignity of freemen. The revolution was to be prepared by national education.

This object being obtained, nothing could be easier than to determine all the different states to an almost simultaneous rise; to combat, overthrow, and rebuild. Firmness and unanimity of purpose were sure, in the end, to prevail against Austria, and to command the respect and sympathy of other nations. What Italy really willed, no effort of allied despots could withstand.

But how many grave, complicate, insurmountable obstacles were thrown into the way of national education! The weariness and inertia of a lazy, ignorant, corrupt population, still aching and bleeding with the consequences of recent political calamities, and shuddering at the very name of soldierly executions; the panic terror inspired by the apparatus of foreign armies, quartered in inexpugnable fortresses, and threatening the most populous towns with imminent, instantaneous ruin; the consciousness of their own effeminate, unwarlike habits—of their almost total destitution of arms, of disciplined soldiers, of experienced leaders; the absolute impracticability of easy and safe communications from state to state; the insecurity of the post-office; the

vexations of all kinds to which travellers were submitted; the anxieties caused by a searching, harassing, all-prying police, opposing all spirit of association; its shameless violation of persons and dwellings; the suddenness and mysteriousness of its arbitrary measures; the vigilance, activeness, and invisibility of its numberless agents, and the universal mistrust and demoralization arising therefrom; the deplorable state of elementary schools, and the iron rule presiding over the direction of the universities; the suppression of the chairs of political economy—of moral philosophy—of every study in which the slightest allusion was made to the rights and duties of men; the censorship, extending its absurd and undiscerning tyranny equally to ancient and modern works, proscribing all organs of public opinion; and, in the meanwhile, the active influence of a dark host of priests and Jesuits, exasperated by their recent reverses, and proceeding with the inveterate animosity of men struggling for existence; the contagious example of eight courts promoting luxury and licentiousness, and, by the means of enervating pleasures, encouraging the indolence and dissipation of the people—all seemed not only intended to deter the Italian patriots from every attempt to ameliorate the condition of their countrymen; but even to

convince them of the impossibility of preventing their utmost degradation and enslavement.

Yet the patriots despaired not.

The ancient league of the Carbonari, whose co-operation in the reinstalment of the ancient governments had been requited with persecution and perjury, now rallied for the purpose of undoing that work of restoration to which they had unwittingly been instrumental.

It joined in secret formidable bands; it called the people around its standard, and unable, in the midst of such arduous circumstances, to educate them, it overawed them by strange rites and mysteries,—it bound them by vague but tremendous pledges,—it enlisted them into a devoted militia, and prepared them for a certain, though as yet vague and remote hour of action.

Unfortunately, the rapid success of its tenebrous work of affiliation, the numbers and character of its proselytes, without inspiring the league with a full confidence in its own forces, were sufficient to urge its members to rash, premature attempts.

They feared, not without reason, the results of the long-continued attacks of priestcraft on the superstitious credulity of the populace. They perceived among the lowest classes, a rapid relapse into their brutal habits. They were unwilling to

allow the last swell of revolutionary effervescence to subside into the deathlike apathy of servitude. They wished, by the aid of a partial, transitional revolution, to bestow on a portion of the country, at least, the advantages of freedom of thought, of the liberty of the press, of a representative government. They hoped that one of the Italian states might thus be made the focus of a general insurrectional system,—might afford them leisure for a gradual rise of public opinion,—might furnish them with the instruments wherewith to counteract the influence of so many evil elements, and openly proceed to their great work of national education.

Events were soon favourable to the realization of this short-sighted policy. Spain which, at the restoration, had also been the victim of deceptive promises, had successfully risen against its perjured monarch, and obliged him to fulfil his engagements.

Ferdinand of Naples had been no less liberal of fair offers, nor less ready to violate the sanctity of his compact with his people, than Ferdinand of Spain. The Italians thought that he might as easily be compelled to grant, or rather to restore that constitution which had been bestowed upon his Sicilian subjects in 1812, under English patronage, and which had been most unaccountably annulled in 1814.

They could do it, and did it. It cost them scarcely a drop of blood. The King of Naples was at the mercy of the Carbonari.

But the Neapolitan and the Piedmontese insurrections of 1820 and 1821, were not, nor were meant as a national revolution. They were only an initiatory movement by which the lovers of Italian independence would have enabled themselves to remove all obstacles to the emancipation of thought.

They had no faith in French charters or Spanish constitutions; no feelings of devotion towards the kings or princes whom they placed at the head of the movement. But they flattered themselves that royal names could have power to sanction popular deeds; that they could reform the state without affording any legitimate pretext for foreign interference; that England, France, and other constitutional powers, would be the natural allies of governments which followed a system of policy analogous to their own; that the diplomatists of 1814 would consider themselves bound to support an insurrection, whose avowed object only was the vindication of those rights of which they had all stood forward as guarantees and sponsors.

In accordance with these views they carefully avoided every allusion to the name of Italy, of

independence and unity, to which, however, all their efforts were directed, and which was already almighty in the hearts of all. They strove to allay the tide of popular enthusiasm that threatened to drag them, in spite of themselves, beyond the limits prescribed by their narrow-minded foresight; they rejected the fraternity of neighbouring states; discouraged, disarmed, and demoralized the ardent youths who had run to arms, and who were willing to attack, rather than to abide the enemy; and allowed their conquered, captive monarchs to repair to Laybach, to abjure their oaths, and, at the head of the Austrians, to march against the rebels whilst yet unprepared and discordant.

It was not long before the Italians perceived the consequences of their infatuation. Austria pledged herself to the maintenance of peace, and was by her allies left the only arbiter of the destinies of Italy. The success was not an instant doubtful.

The insurgents of 1821 paid dearly for their experiment; yet it was neither the sole nor the last trial.

The great process of national regeneration continued. The progress and diffusion of knowledge; the increase of wealth and population necessarily resulting, even in an oppressed country, from the long continuance of peace;

the interchange, development, and diffusion of ideas even through the organ of a fettered press; the intercourse with other nations more happily situated, was, in a considerable degree, sufficient to give increase and consistency to public opinion.

The long and severe punishments with which the deluded patriots were visited, by which mourning and desolation were thrown into the bosom of the most influential families; the stifled groans from the dungeons of Spielberg; the blood from the scaffolds of Modena, had roused the dormant resentment—the active sympathy of the people.

There was no longer any necessity for resorting to secret societies. What had been the result of subterranean conspiracies, was now to be effected by open, spontaneous insurrections. The passions of the multitude needed no further incitement.

Nothing was wanted but a favourable opportunity.

The Italians were now almost ripe for a complete revolution; extraneous circumstances once more determined them to a second partial experiment.

France had risen. It had overthrown the work of foreign invaders. It had separated itself from the interests of the holy alliance. It

had thrown the gauntlet to despotism. It had dragged, in its movement, Belgium, Poland, and a part of Germany. It had made an appeal to the malcontents of all Europe. It had entered with all nations into a pact of non-intervention. That pact had thus far been respected and, as it were, tacitly acknowledged.

The Italians, resolved to try how far that compact would hold good for themselves.

It was thought that the non-intervention might, by the means of sectional revolts, pave the way for the success of a general national effort; that the fear of a war with France would stay the sword of Austria in its scabbard, until the insurgents felt themselves ready to attack that power within its very strongholds of Lombardy.

They rose.—They directed their first attacks against those governments whence the least resistance might be expected. The Duke of Modena, the most cordially hated; the pope, the most utterly despised of all Italian rulers; the Duchess of Parma, by her profligacy degraded in the eyes of her subjects, were overthrown without an obstacle. The tricolour standard flew like a meteor from town to town. Not a sword was unsheathed,—not a voice raised for the cause of despotism. In less than three days two millions of Italians were free.

But the movement of 1831, like that of 1821, was influenced by foreign insinuations. It was grounded on views of foreign diplomacy: all revolutionary measures were limited to prevent any provocation of hostilities, by a blind adhesion to the pact of non-intervention. No decisive step could be taken until it was fully ascertained how far Austria would abide by it; how far that power might be overawed by the proclamations of France. Still not a word was said about Italy, to give the insurrection the appearance of a national rise. All was paralyzed, from its earliest start, by that inconceivable hallucination.

For a moment, indeed, it seemed as if Austria dreaded to come to an open rupture. The Austrian garrison at Ferrara withdrew from the town, and suffered the national colours to wave triumphantly before their eyes. But it was only for a moment. No sooner had the cabinet of Vienna ascertained the real intentions of Louis Philippe, than the Hungarians advanced. The insurgents offered no resistance.

The unsatisfactory result of those successive insurrections, have branded the Italians with a disgrace that, as a nation, they did not, perhaps, entirely deserve. They have been set down as a faint-hearted race, unwilling to fight for, and therefore unworthy of liberty.

The bitterest reproach of cowardice and pusillanimity awaited the fugitives in the land of exile, as the only welcome they had a right to expect from unsympathizing strangers. France, especially, by whose perfidious suggestions these ill-digested movements were precipitated, loaded with ignominy those refugees whose too ready submission exposed her own territory to the dangers of an Austrian invasion. The dastardly defection of the Italian liberals was contrasted with the torrents of blood that the Polish heroes were then shedding, rather, alas! for France than for Poland. The Italians would not have been less unfeelingly sacrificed than the Poles; but every battle they had given would have operated a diversion in favour of France, and obtained fair terms for her from the allies.

But, be it repeated, the Italian nation has not yet risen. No Italian revolution ever took place; and the unsuccessful attempts of 1821 and 1831, were only meant as a preparatory step, as a transitional movement, by the aid of which, it was expected, the germs of Italian regeneration might be sown, and the final catastrophe slowly and safely matured.

Those unhappy revolts were the consequence of false principles, of fond misconceptions; of an imperfect acquaintance with the positive

relations between Austria and the so-called independent states—with the real views of foreign diplomacy; of a blind reliance on vague suggestions from abroad.

Had the insurrection, from its very beginning, developed its national character; had the cry of Italian unity and independence been raised at once; had not the revolution, in short, been disavowed by its authors, the event might have been more than doubtful.

The movement would have been general and instantaneous: it would have begun where the elements of immediate resistance were to be found. Its first step would have been an irruption into Lombardy,—a declaration of war to Austria.

But not even the rapidity of their success, not even the unanimity of the people, could inspire the leaders with sufficient faith and determination. Indeed, the very facility of those first movements seemed to unfit them for the ensuing struggle. They seemed to flatter themselves that liberty could be maintained as easily as it had been obtained. They were willing to preserve in its purity that bloodless revolution in which they, very justly, prided themselves.

But it is fated that freedom can never be asserted on earth, without long and desperate

strife; that it is never fully established until it is cemented with blood; that it can only be won and secured by a nation that feels in its own energies the means of asserting it against all odds,—the will to obtain it at any rate.

In pursuance of their chimerical views, those patriots not only neglected to avail themselves of such means as the universal effervescence afforded them, but turned all their efforts to discountenance the impatient zeal of the ardent youths who entered not into their views. They employed all the arguments of persuasion, and even open force, to banish all ideas of resistance; and seemed, above all things, anxious to remove every obstacle to the enemy's progress.

This unnatural conduct, so very nearly bordering on treason, was, however, dictated by the most sincere and pious, though certainly not very magnanimous intentions.

The idea of Austrian omnipotence was deeply rooted in the hearts of the aged men who were generally intrusted with the government of the revolted provinces. The conviction that bands of undisciplined citizens could withstand the charge of a regular soldiery, could never enter their minds. In their eagerness to avoid all subjects of collision,—of subduing the bold spirits which would have naturally

risen from the consciousness of their own forces, they would never allow the Italian youths to be mustered into national battalions. Hence, when the spell of illusion was broken, and the Austrian advanced, they had done all in their power, not only to disarm, but to unman the defenders of the country.

The horrors of military licentiousness, such as they had witnessed during twenty years of recent invasions, were still present to their terrified imaginations. They saw the awful calamities to which the slightest show of resistance would expose their helpless countrymen.

They feared not for themselves.—The heroic death that some of those same faint-hearted patriots sought on the battle-field, in Greece, in Spain, every where in the land of exile; the firmness with which others underwent the ordeal of long imprisonment; and the serene countenance which they bore on the scaffold; are sufficient to absolve them from the charge of personal timidity.

But a foreboding charity towards their native cities, towards their homes, towards an unprotected crowd of women, against whom the outrages of Pavia and Verona would be perpetrated, did not allow them, in that moment of perturbation, to think of the indelible stain they inflicted on the glory of

the Italian name; of the demoralizing effect that the example of that ungenerous surrender would have on future generations; of the discredit that their cowardice would bring on the cause of liberty all over the world.

They did not reflect that, however justifiable their apprehensions might be before the insurrection took place, as soon as the signal was given, it became their duty to stifle all feelings of regret and misgiving in their bosom, and to impress themselves and their followers with the sacredness of the compact into which they had entered; of asserting their freedom, or dying for it.

God knows, there were many in Italy willing to die!

Humbled even more than disheartened by these repeated failures, the Italians are not likely to venture again on similar experiments. They have thus far at least profited by their disappointment, that no ground is left for future illusion. They have come to a conclusion which, as we have said, ought to have been obvious before the disastrous trial took place, but which they had lost sight of in their sanguine impatience,—that, as long as they lend a willing ear to the perfidious insinuations of foreigners; as long as they rely upon aid from without, to fight the battle with their oppressors, they betray their incompetency to main-

tain the position of a free state; and that such assistance, even if ever rendered, would ultimately serve only to prepare them for the evils of renewed servitude. They feel that their emancipation must be the result of their own efforts; and that it must be accomplished, not only without the direct or indirect interference of foreign powers in their behalf, but even, if necessary, in open opposition to all and each of them.

Hence they have, at least for the present, relinquished every thought of an armed vindication of their national rights; and, with the tactics of a general who changes his siege into a blockade, they have returned to their primitive schemes for the regeneration of their national character; for the general diffusion of knowledge among the lowest classes; for a forcible rehabilitation of their name in the opinion of their neighbours.

They hope that, reassured by the long continuance of peace, and prevailed upon by the overwhelming force and unanimity of public opinion, their governments will gradually feel compelled to acknowledge that there is an Italy: and that, if by the right of self-preservation, they are entitled to quench all insurrectional spirit tending to bring about a national, political unity, they cannot be able to prevent

their subjects from uniting to aid and encourage each other in the promotion of public welfare, and in the diffusion of intellectual culture.

A complete moral revolution must precede any future political movement.

But the malison of Heaven seems to hang over unfortunate Italy. That popular education, which foreign despots encourage, and enforce abroad, is the object of the blind persecution of the Italian rulers. The head of the church launches the thunders of the Vatican against its promoters; the inoffensive schoolmaster is thrown into the dungeons of St. Angelo. Despotism feels that opinion is force, and trusts that fetters and chains may yet be able to crush it.

Events, however, have recently taken place in Italy, which seem to announce the prevailing ascendency of thought. Such are the yearly meetings of Italian scholars, the first held at Pisa in 1839, the second last year at Turin; and the treaty of literary alliance, by which the privilege of copyright has been extended nearly to the whole country.

The advantages to be reaped by these apparently trifling incidents, cannot be appreciated without a knowledge of the full extent of the evils by which that country is afflicted. The Italians have every thing to hope from a

spirit of national association; and they think that nothing can be, in peaceful times, more directly conducive to that happy result, than the unity of mental pursuits, the assimilation of the national language, the centralization of science and literature, and the compilation of natural history.

Yet even to the attainment of these harmless and, apparently, unmeaning objects, the institutions of their governments opposed the most serious obstacles.

Copyright in Italy was secured to the author or editor, only within the narrow district in which his work was published. He knew full well that at the distance of twenty or thirty miles, there were a number of piratical printers, lawfully entitled to seize upon his property as soon as it obtained any degree of popularity; and as the sale of books—except in the kingdom of Naples, where they pay a very heavy duty—was commercially free, those piracies were put forth and circulated under the very eyes of the author. A name of the highest standing was no protection against this impudent system of depredation. Botta, an exile, was obliged to sell in Paris, as waste paper, the splendid French edition of his History of Italy; while Swiss or Italian booksellers were making their fortunes by an uninterrupted series of its

republications. Manzoni received from his publisher a trifling sum for the manuscript of the "Promessi Sposi," and that only as a present; and in vain did Pellico, at every new work he produced, urge the moral duty of respecting a privilege which constitutes now-a-days a part of the rights of nations, and request the gentlemen of the press not to defraud him of the honest recompense of his labour.

Such an evil was not, indeed, unattended by some salutary effects. Literature in Italy was never reduced to the level of a trade. It could only be cultivated by men of independent fortune. The Italian princes were no longer in a condition to hire the pens of mercenary writers; and upon the maxim of the Republic of Venice, they wished their governments never to be spoken of either in praise or censure.

The "Voce della Verità," and similar organs of government, by dwelling too freely on topics of national interest, have already, to a great extent, served the cause they were intended to oppose. The rights of absolute power are best advocated by absolute silence. Consequently, all court poets and historiographers have long ago been silenced. Even had there been writers in Italy willing to sell their productions, it would not have been easy to find a purchaser. Flattery was a merchandize

equally discredited by power and public opinion.

Literature, in consequence, although oppressed and fettered, was yet more dignified and uncorrupted than in many free countries; it followed not the capricious opinions of the multitude, but it marched at the head of social movement, a stern censor, dictating and ruling with an authority, which the consciousness of its irreprehensibility gave it a right to exert.

Since the year 1814, no immoral book of any note has issued from the press in Italy. All have been directed to one leading object, —the severe reformation of moral principles. This is no doubt the consequence of the censorship, which is exercised with equal vigilance in all Italian states, and which, in a political point of view, every freeman must cordially detest. But as it is in the secret ways of Providence to turn an instrument of evil into an agent of good, it cannot be doubted that Italian morals have benefited by that restriction; and however true may be the descriptions of Italian profligacy given every day by French and English travellers, still it is consoling to think that the Italians have no such teachers of morals as Bulwer or Ainsworth, Paul de Kock or Victor Hugo.

Italy, moreover, possessed no centre of lite-

rature, no such literary metropolis as Paris, London, or Edinburgh; no literary fair such as is yearly held in Leipsic or Drèsden. The journals, which might have exercised a general influence on the whole country, such as the "Conciliatore," the "Antologia," and the "Subalpino," have been successfully suppressed; and the numberless literary periodicals which continue in our days with rare perseverance, must be conducted with a timidity and narrow-mindedness, which can alone, in the present state of things, secure their existence.

Consequently, every town or province in Italy was kept in a perfect state of ignorance of the progress of its immediate neighbours. All efforts tending to establish an Italian periodical bibliography, have been void of effect.

It cannot, therefore, be surprising to hear how slow the progress of new ideas must be in that country. The most popular works, novels and poems, even when not rigorously proscribed, are often translated into all foreign languages, before they are generally known in Italy. But such works as the "Romanze" of Berchet—a collection of patriotic songs—must literally 'fight their way into the country. Those poems published in London, and afterwards at Lugano in Switzerland, were circulated

for many years in manuscript, learned by heart, and transmitted from town to town by enthusiastic admirers, after the manner of ancient minstrels, ere a single printed copy could obtain admission into that iron-fenced garden of Europe.

These very impediments, however, thus thrown in the way of publication, frustrated the intent of those who create them. The works that government proscribe, have, like all other forbidden fruits, a peculiar relish. The censure of the Tuscan police made the fortune of Guerrazzi's "Assedio di Firenze." By their jealousy and suspicion, the government shows where lies their vulnerable side. Literary reputations, confirmed by so many years of struggle and trial, are based on a more solid ground. The writer in Italy is oftentimes looked upon as a hero and martyr; and his words go forth like the voice of an oracle.

The want of free circulation and literary commerce has also the advantage of deterring mediocrity from forcing itself into public notice. All modern productions must undergo a process, which nothing but the purest ore can withstand.

If I appear to look on the better side of the national calamities of Italy, it is because the people of that country seem to have reason to

anticipate a better state of things; because it seems that from that mutual compact between the different states, providing for the security of literary property all over the country, and by that congress of *savants* of every province, they are entitled to expect that their governments will be finally compelled to acknowledge the force of social progress, and to give way before its irresistible tendencies.

This undeniable improvement in the intellectual and moral condition of Italy, has been either wilfully overlooked by foreign visiters, or otherwise hastily attributed to those very causes by which all social movement is most forcibly opposed.

How men may be found who do not hesitate to assert that the Austrian rule is a blessing of Heaven to civilize and humanize Italy: how, by a comparison between the administration of the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom, and that of the now bigoted, now absurdly tyrannical, but always improvident and imbecile princes, who call themselves independent, it may be inferred that the Italians are unfit to govern themselves, and that every attempt at improvement must invariably receive its first start under Austrian auspices—is more than can enter our understandings.

We have always believed—if I may be allowed

to speak for my countrymen—in an Italian progress, exclusively resulting from the energy of the soundest part of the population: we have always thought that it would be obvious to every impartial observer, that powerful and immortal elements of cohesion and vitality must remain in a country doomed to bear so long an hour of trial: we wondered what other nation might have been able to withstand the combined evils of long division and thraldom—the repeated calamities of invasion and war—the constant influence of a crafty, bigoted, and powerful priesthood, and yet preserve all the outward aspect of growth and prosperity, and closely follow their more fortunate transalpine and transmarine neighbours, in science, letters, and arts. We looked at Spain, not earlier than three centuries ago the mistress of both continents; the ruler of the destinies of the globe; the first destroyer of Italy; Spain, always preserving its integrity and independence, and yet, without any external impulse, by one of the many calamities which she had in common with Italy—popery, brought down from her height of power, and plunged into such a depth of ignorance and misery, that it may be doubted whether any constitution will ever redeem her.

We then turned to the dignified behaviour of the Milanese in presence of their foreign

rulers, and of their mute but firm protest against that time-sanctioned infringement of their national right, by a jealous and obstinate avoidance of all intercourse with the hated Austrian soldiery; and we were reminded of the twice subdued, and thrice fermenting Romagna, and of the imposing apparatus by which Austria finds it necessary, in the midst of peace, to turn the whole of the Lombard plain into a vast casern;—when we considered all this, we flattered ourselves that every one might suspect that there was no good understanding between us and our governments; we thought that it would be evident that the genius and energies of the nation must be crushed by so rigid a system of suspicion and force; and that to such a state of things all social evil in Italy must be essentially attributed.

We may praise the uprightness and sincerity of writers, who, labouring at the preservation of European peace; feeling the immediate advantages resulting from the amicable relation of their governments with Austria, consider it as unwise and treacherous to hold out any hope of co-operation to the patriots of Italy; and who dwell on the political necessity that restrains the free nations of Europe from interfering in their behalf; but when we hear others insisting on the right that the Austrians have to force

their sleepy rule on a nation so entirely their opposite in character, spirit, and genius as we are, and unblushingly congratulating us on the "slow, but sure system of civilization that we are undergoing under Austrian paternity," we cannot help being reminded of that generous animal that administered the last kick to the lion brought down by his rivals, and lying wounded and helpless in his death throes.

Say that nations have adopted the maxims of individualism: "Every man for himself, and God for us all." Say that England, though certainly she has nothing to fear, still has nothing to gain, from the emancipation and union of Italy,—from a revival of public spirit amongst a people, formerly the most industrious and enterprising in Europe. Say that the enslavement of Italy, as well as Poland, Hungary, and Germany, is necessary to the continuation of that unnatural state of things, which is called European equilibrium. Say that your manufactures and trade will thrive the more rapidly, the more you can depend upon the tribute, the more you are free from the competition of nations, held in a state of brutality and *helotism*. Say that the train of civilization must progress, even though Italy and Poland be crushed under its wheels. Be your cry, "Peace, peace," though we might,

perhaps, reply with Lady Constance:

"War! war! no peace! Peace is to me a war.
O England! mighty England!
Thou ever strong upon the strongest side.
Thou bearest the lion's hide! Doff it for shame,
And hang a calf-skin on those recreant limbs!"

It is thus that travellers seem to conspire to dishearten a people who have already so many causes to despair of their country,—that they contribute to keep alive the national ill-will that is rankling in the bosom of all European families.

Had they ever studied Italy, free from illiberal prepossessions; had they sounded the depth of that "happy order and silence" that reigns at Milan, they would have found a people anxious and restless,—perplexed by vague, but intense longings for greatness,—aiming at high, but often impracticable undertakings,—striving by fits and starts to follow the European movement, but falling midway, sinking under the weight of a thousand shackles, which it must drag along in its movements.

They would have seen in all those roads across the Apennines, along the sea shore, in those rival lines of steamers plying along the coasts of the Mediterranean, on the Po and the Adriatic, in those first attempts at railroads to Castellamare and Monza, that the spirit

of enterprise arises invariably from private association, and receives but a late and reluctant sanction from the mistrusting governments.

Above all things, they would have been aware that the first meeting of Italian scientific men at Pisa, and the new understanding between some of the Italian governments, concerning a mutual guarantee of literary property, are to be merely considered as results of that new spirit of life and activity irresistibly felt throughout the country, and having power to bend to its views even the weighty deliberations of the Aulic council at Vienna.

These mutual compacts, establishing the foundation of scientific and literary unity, which the Italians, last of all civilized governments, have finally been shamed into; to which some of the most obstinate, nominally the pope and the Duke of Modena, still sturdily deny their countenance, are only a first step, and one, apparently, of very secondary importance. But the Italians are not, perhaps, wholly wrong when they expect from it more momentous consequences than it was given to the authors of those measures to anticipate.

The people of that country feel, above all things, the want of unanimity.

Not, indeed, that the resentment of ancient republican grudges, or even the narrow-minded

feelings of mutual mistrust and contempt between the different provinces, can be said to exist to any great extent in our days, whatever may be the notions of prejudiced travellers on that subject.

But the Italians have been so long estranged from each other; the name of their country has been so long buried in oblivion; their local interests have been so artfully directed into different and opposite channels, that their patriotic ideas—I speak of the unenlightened classes—have still something vague and undetermined: the natural boundaries of the country seem to shift from one district to another, so as to induce the traveller to conclude that, geographically as well as politically, there is no Italy.

To efface from the minds of the people these last remnants of illiberal provincialisms, rather engendered by ignorance than ill-will; to foster the redeeming idea of Italian nationality, the intelligent classes in Italy are actively employed.

To bring about the reform and enfranchisement of the national language, the works of Perticari, Monti, Cesari, and other philological writers, have assiduously contributed since the beginning of the nineteenth century. They have hastened the downfal of that old edifice

of pedantry, by which the Academy della Crusca had brought the Italian language to a dead stand. The still surviving universities, no less than the primary and infant schools,—recently disseminated wherever they did not, as at Rome, meet with unconquerable opposition on the part of government,—have left nothing unattempted to bring the most uncouth dialects to the level of the purest Tuscan standard. The vocabularies of the Venetian, Sicilian, and every other provincial *patois*, printed with a view to aid the people in their acquirement of the written language, and the republication of Italian dictionaries at Bologna, Verona, Naples, and Padua, announce a new fact, about which foreigners never entertained any doubt, but which, as I have said, had never been sufficiently established since the age of Dante—that there is an Italian language.

The annual meeting of eminent scientific men at one of the several universities of the country, will have a most salutary effect on the progress of science, by enabling the most active scholars to meet, to count, to understand, and mutually appreciate each other by the assurance of the reward of national suffrage, which awaits the result of their efforts at every reunion of that scientific diet.

It would be difficult to express with what

extraordinary enthusiasm several hundred *savants*, the representatives of the aristocracy of the mind in Italy, convene from the remotest provinces to make the enumeration of the services rendered by their forefathers to the interests of science,—to lay the first stone of monuments to be erected to their memory,—to demonstrate, by their own endeavours, that science in Italy is certainly neither in a backward nor yet in a stationary condition: and whoever reflects that this is the first time, perhaps, since the days of Pico della Mirandola, that the Italians have been convoked even for so innocent a purpose, will easily sympathize with a people so placed, as to hail the meeting of a few professors and scholars as a national triumph, and make it a subject of universal rejoicing.

The privilege of copyright will bring the interests of the different petty literary centres of Turin, Milan, Venice, Florence, etc., to a common understanding, secure the free circulation, at least, of all the works published in the country; whilst the increase of daily, weekly, and monthly periodicals, will hasten and extend their diffusion, and lay the basis of a universal Italian bibliography. For hitherto the Italian despots did not even agree in their system of oppression, or rather, they were sometimes

pleased to flatter their subjects by a little display of comparative mildness, and indulge in the specious illusion of a precarious independence. But the equitable intercourse of literary commerce, necessarily attendant upon a mutual guarantee of copyright, will soon bring a beneficial uniformity in the police regulations of the different states; and the Italians are not, perhaps, too sanguine in their expectations, if they hope that the decree on literary property may be considered as a first step towards the establishment of a moderate freedom of the press.

A higher tone of daring opinion and free discussion is already prevailing in some of the periodicals that enjoy the greatest degree of popularity, especially the "Politecnico," and the "Rivista Europea," at Milan. It is a melancholy spectacle to see how many evasive, elusive devices those unhappy writers are compelled to resort to, in order to baffle the watchfulness, the obstinacy, the extravagance of those ignorant turnkeys of public opinion.

Truly, notwithstanding the precautions and restrictions adopted by those journals, few or none can boast of steering clear of the breakers that beset their progress. Every day tidings are brought us of the sinking of some of those that seemed to sail most exultingly,

borne by wind and tide. But soon after their downfal, other equally devoted believers are seen spreading their canvass, and venturing once more on their track.

Thus the symptoms of an intellectual revolution are every where apparent in Italy. Every where the patriots seem to be impressed with a leading idea—that mental emancipation must necessarily be the forerunner of civil enfranchisement: that by asserting their common origin, by establishing bonds of literary association, by interchanging feelings of mutual fraternity and sympathy, by appealing to the common testimonials of their former greatness —they may lay the basis of future Italian nationality; that by the instrument of popular instruction, by the influence of their exhortation and example, they may raise the uneducated classes from their state of languor and stupor, and lead them to feel, to resist, and to will, that they may, by the consciousness of their unanimity, revive that faith and hope which frequent reverses have shaken, and which alone can command success.

But are their hopes as well founded, are their plans as plausible, and their means as equal to their ends, as their intentions are pious and sacred?

Time alone can answer these questions; for

if, on the one hand, it is with every virtuous Italian a matter of religious belief, that his country will one day be called to a better destiny—it is, on the other hand, hardly possible to determine on what inscrutable designs the fulfilment of God's will may depend, what instruments he may choose to his work of redemption, how long this hour of severe probation may yet endure.

Nor can it be dissembled that contrary elements are, in the meanwhile, as actively, and, if not more successively, at least, more freely at work.

The superstitious ceremonies; the dangerous tenets of a corrupt religion, so easily turned into a source of deception by adroit and unprincipled ministers; the recurrence of frequent religious solemnities, daily instituted by royal hypocrites; the canonization of new saints; the enforcement of sacramental practices, which gives us reason to apprehend the re-establishment of the Inquisition, at least in Turin; the slow and silent, but sure reinstalment of the Jesuits, notwithstanding the most violent resistance they met with at Parma, Vicenza, and Verona;—every measure seems intended to revive the age of ignorance and fanaticism.

Still the late events have sufficiently demonstrated that the superstition of the people is but

a weak and faithless support to the cause of despotism; and, without the aid of foreign interference, no priestly contrivance could have prevented the pope, and the whole catholic system, from yielding to the attacks of the insurgents of central Italy in 1831.

An open resistance is not, therefore, so much to be apprehended on the part of the multitude, as that apathy and passivity to which they have been trained for centuries. It has hitherto opposed its material force of inertia to all innovations, of which no one as yet has made them sufficiently feel the advantages.

It must not be forgotten that the policy of Austria, and of its dependent governments, has ever been to flatter and pamper the lowest classes; so that, whilst the populace is in general more wretchedly fed and clad in Italy than in any other Christian community, still it is not altogether the most discontented or unhappy, or is, at least, very far from referring its sufferings to the real cause.

Neither is this to be said only of the populace; but amongst all ranks, whoever consents to forego the dignity, the energy, the pride, the noblest attributes of man; whoever presumes not to make use of the understanding and free will by which Providence raised him above the level of brutes, is, in Italy, more than

any where else, allowed to vegetate and fatten undisturbed.

Hence, the inactivity, the indulgence in gross epicurism, the frivolous pleasures in which the great majority of our countrymen miserably waste their existence, and which has been vaguely attributed to the enervating influence of a southern climate, as if under that same sun, and in that same latitude, the most frugal and industrious, as well as the bravest people, had not, in other times, been known to thrive.

The most active mind feels confined and circumscribed within the close boundaries of those petty states. It sinks under the consciousness of its insufficiency. It yields before the well-experienced invincibility of the obstacles it has to contend with. A general discouragement, listlessness and ennui, prevail all over the country, especially south of the Apennines, only interrupted by the shouts of maddening joy at carnival, or the mummeries of a doting religion at Easter.

The foreign tourist who lands in Italy, his head surfeited with classical traditions of Roman or Florentine greatness; the weary exile who revisits his native land, his head still dizzy with the whirl of social movement he has witnessed abroad, can hardly reconcile himself

to the idea that that is the Italy whose name had power to call forth such glorious remembrances, or such sanguine expectations.

It seems as if the very buildings, the very land, bore the marks of a slow decay, of a lingering death. You would say that even the Arno and Tiber have dwindled into two muddy, insignificant streamlets, as if to break the spell of grandeur and majesty attached to their names.

Hence, although the cause of the country may, to a considerable extent, be considered as having overcome all moral resistance; although the desire of Italian nationality lies latent but inextinguishable in every heart—yet the efforts of active patriotism are counteracted by a vague despondency, by an insane and guilty neutrality, and, above all, by that individualism which seems to be the besetting sin of our age, but which, of course, must be more powerful where public spirit is utterly discountenanced by despotism.

In France, in Spain, in all independent countries, the will of a few well-meaning philanthropists, and the acquiescence of the masses, would be more than sufficient to secure success. But in Italy there is a dead weight of brutal force, the preponderance of a colossal power, which there is no chance of overthrowing

until the few patriots that constitute the soul of the nation, have communicated their sense and life to the unwieldy body of the people, and forced it, willing or unwilling, into action. And as if something were still wanting to increase the general discouragement, new difficulties arise amongst the liberals, from the very difficulties they have to contend with.

For, although in the abstract, and in a general point of view, the emancipation of their country from foreign powers, is the object of all their endeavours; though every one feels that independence can only be secured by a bond of unity; that a democratic form of government is natural, and, as it were, indigenous to Italy; and that no monarchic or aristocratic elements can be found among the unpopular families of their foreign princes, among the impoverished and degraded members of their national nobility—yet they do not all agree as to the practicability of establishing a new republican state immediately upon the ruins of the present social edifice.

Some are to be found, even amongst the warmest lovers of their country, who, deeming the immediate transition from utter servitude to the intoxicating excitement of popular freedom, fraught with hazard and danger; considering also that the name of repub-

lic might prove invidious and obnoxious to all the powers of Europe—would fain have recourse once more to middle and transitional measures; such as the creation of an independent, constitutional government in the north of Italy, to be given either to a prince of the house of Savoy, or to any other adventurer, in fact, whose ambition might be tempted to venture on such an enterprise. Others, dreading that the lustre of so many capitals would diminish in consequence of their losing their rank; alleging the different degrees of civilization that the different provinces have attained in proportion as they were more favourably situated; and appealing to the memories of the past, showing how wealth, power and prosperity may be compatible in Italy with territorial division —incline to vote for a federation of republics, or, at least, of free states, after the models of America and Switzerland, rather than for an absolute union of Italy. Whilst the most impatient and sanguine, the most enthusiastic believers, especially the youths who belong to the new association vaguely known under the name of "Young Italy," loudly declaim against the infatuation of a narrow-minded policy, the result of which could only be to plunge the country into the disgrace and misery of 1820 and 1831, and urge the necessity of enlisting

the multitude in their cause, by placing the sovereignty utterly, unconditionally into the hands of the people, from which all power emanates, and accomplishing the revolution of Italy at one decisive, definitive stroke.

I have already expressed my incompetence or unwillingness to enter into the discussion of such dangerous, and as yet useless and impracticable political questions. My opinion is, that, as their universal hatred of Austria, and their fondness for the name of their country, are sufficient to unite the Italians under one common standard, it is the duty of every one of us to follow that standard, by whatever man or party, and in behalf of whatever political principle, we may be called to join it.

Let us rise in the name of God and our country, as our forefathers have done in the blessed days of the Lombard league. Let us have no enemy but one—our foreign oppressor. Let us put our trust in God alone, and in our own exertions.

As there can be no cause more just, so neither can there be one less liable to schism or dissidence.

Our dissensions only resulted from the natural exasperation of disappointment; but in the secret of our hearts we have felt that we are brothers, and that the hour of trial will find us strong in our unanimity and love.

CHAPTER III.

LITERATURE AFTER 1814.

Influence of German literature—Romanticism—Manzoni—Reaction in favour of catholicism—State of religious opinions — Transitional literature — Pellico — Niccolini—Tendency of the age—Works of historical erudition—Concluding remarks.

FROM all that has been said of the state of men's minds in Italy, it results that, if letters ever had a holy, redeeming mission on earth, such must certainly be the office which they are called to perform in that country, in our days.

Historical and philosophical works; periodical and fugitive literature, though closely harassed by the manifold engines of tyranny, yet all display a tendency to the development of new energies—all co-operate to urge on with a new impulse the whole social order, to activate, to incarnate Thought.

To search into the most obscure annals of history, and reveal the glories of the land; to derive from that past lustre a feeling of shame for present disgrace, a ray of hope for future resurrection; to spread a chivalrous, devotional, enterprising spirit, inviting men to think, to struggle, to suffer; to combat individualism, and all that tends to isolate man, and make him forgetful of what he owes to society; to exhibit in dark colours—darker even to exaggeration, the evils of division and servitude, and cry, ITALY! ITALY!—such is the mission of that new school of literature, to which the vague denomination of *Romantic* is generally applied.

Though some of them may be misled by a party spirit, by excessive zeal, or by short-sighted prejudices, there is not a writer of any credit in Italy, who does not conscientiously exert his powers for the improvement of the human race: none that do not actively seek the welfare of his country.

Letters have resumed their place in society.

As, however, on the one hand, no idle academical or Arcadian literature would any longer be countenanced by public opinion, and, on the other, literature of life is stifled and crushed by the agents of power, the consequence is, that uncertainty and silence prevail. There is

only one string in the poet's harp to which Italian hearts can respond, and that is the very string which it is high treason to strike.

This state of perplexity has also been increased by the revolution which the rules of taste have recently undergone all over Europe.

As soon as, after the fall of Napoleon, the abating of the revolutionary flood offered some ground for studious pursuits, the German literature, ripened among the preceding commotions, appeared on the tops of the Alps in all the freshness of youth.

Old Italy, exhausted with the productions of five centuries, seemed inclined to rest under the shade of her laurels, to survey the youthful efforts of happier nations; like a superannuated wrestler, with downcast brow and folded arms, looking upon the feats of his disciples, from the head of the circus.

But the believers of young Italy could not be as easily persuaded to inaction. They turned to Germany, to England, and to Spain; to the East and to the North. The sphere of studies was prodigiously extended. Shakspeare and Milton never read or never understood; Garcilasso and Lope de Vega dead and buried; Brahminic verses, Icelandic legends, Gothic epopées, unknown lands, the Niebelungen-lied, the Bible, the Koran, were now placed by the

side of Homer and Dante, of Sophocles and Alfieri; while Goethe and Schiller, Byron and Scott, Lamartine and Victor Hugo, sent every day a supply of new models. It was a literary fair of all ages and countries.

In the midst of that recent affluence, a young enthusiast, with a mind imbued with the maxims of freedom and patriotism common in Italy to all who were educated on this side of 1800, arose to give, by his influence, a name to the literary reform that was rapidly advancing around him—Manzoni.

Aware that the drama and romance were likely to have the most direct influence on the public mind, he gave to Italy two historical tragedies, and an historical novel.

"Carmagnola," and "Adelchi," the best dramas in Italy since the "Saul" of Alfieri, the standard works of Romanticism in that country, have, by the general consent of strangers, been ranked by the side of the best modern productions. Goethe and his school have been proud of adopting their author. They hailed their young disciple with something like a patronising air, gratified by that first homage paid to the German genius by that country from which their ancestors had for five centuries been accustomed to receive their masters.

Of these tragedies, the first only, "Carmagnola," appeared, and only once, on the stage; nor do I believe they could ever meet with any permanent success before an Italian audience. Manzoni, a genius of the very highest order, giving life to all objects he takes in hand; master of all the keys of the imagination and the heart; the greatest lyric poet that Italy ever produced,—did not, perhaps, equally possess that vastness and calmness of mind which can embrace at one glance the whole of a tragedy.

Recently placed in contact with Shakspeare and Schiller,—seeing in their works a manifest breach of the three unities of the Greeks, he believed, perhaps, that they had banished all unity. This is far from being the case. The unity of time from the period of twenty-four hours, had been extended to months and years, to the lifetime of a hero: the scene, from the narrow precincts of the vestibule of a palace, had passed from place to place, had crossed seas and mountains: the four or six personages who were seen moving, spectre-like, on a deserted stage—as the survivors of the deluge, it has been cleverly observed—had been multiplied to a whole court, to a whole nation; but the action, the interest, the movement of the drama, far from stagnating or slackening, was understood to have gained in strength and

intensity. Taking any of the best models of the Romantic theatre,—say, Macbeth and Othello, William Tell and Fiesco,—it will be easily perceived whether the poet or the spectator loses, for a single instant, his leading object.

It is, I repeat, only the scale that has been altered. It is unity in larger dimensions, but still unity.

Now I do not mean that Manzoni's tragedies are wanting in such unity. "Adelchi" is the extinction of the Lombard dynasty. "Carmagnola" is the cold-blooded sacrifice of a confiding warrior to the jealous suspicions of a cowardly government. All the episodes essentially belong to the subject: every scene leads us to the catastrophe. Still there is wanting that warmth, that simplicity of action, that proportion between the means and ends which permit us to view the whole at a glance, and follow its progress through its digressions,—which persuade us of the importance of the episodes,—which keep our minds in suspense, our hearts in anxiety.

While embracing ideas that had recently sprung up abroad, Manzoni imitated only as genius can imitate. His tragedies cannot be strictly said to belong either to the German or English school, though certainly the author

could find no models for such works among the classics.

He does not possess the wide and versatile imagination of Shakspeare, nor the warm and sympathetic heart of Schiller; though we meet with occasional flashes, both of fancy and feeling, that would induce us to believe that his apparent infecundity was rather owing to a vague diffidence and timidity, than to a real want of creative genius. Manzoni seems perpetually haunted by the dread of abandoning himself to the inspiration of the first moment. His pages appear as if filled with corrections, additions, suppressions, *pentimenti d' ogni maniera*. This gives his works unquestionably a very high finish; and every one of his lines gains more and more the longer it is dwelt upon. Still it has an injurious effect on the whole; and, as dramatic performances, these tragedies are utterly deprived of action and interest.

Neither was the poet happier in his delineation of characters. With the exception of some secondary personages, there is hardly, among so many, a portrait whose prominent features may work on our minds a lasting impression. The great figures of the Lombard kings, and of Charlemagne, appear in all the dim and hazy obscurity in which barren his-

tory has left them,—stripped of all the gaudy ornaments with which they had been invested by the fictions of chivalrous legends.

As the ancient mythology had been banished from the stage, so did Manzoni equally proscribe the more domestic romance of the middle ages. How different from his faithful but languid pictures, are the historical scenes dramatized by Shakspeare, who eagerly seized upon the most uncouth popular traditions, and delighted in crowding the stage with hags, spectres, fairies and goblins!

To exhibitions of such a kind, the public taste is, however, utterly averse in Italy. Alfieri knew it well; and his example was more than sufficient to deter every Italian dramatist from those long-exploded sources of interest; nor could there longer be any of the weird family ventured on our stage, without being unmercifully hissed back to its obscure abode.

The tragedies of Manzoni are, therefore, only to be considered in their details and episodes, some of which are indeed inimitable.

Manzoni is, above all things, a lyric poet. The choruses of his tragedies—national songs in the loftiest strain—as well as his "Inni Sacri," and his ode, "Il Cinque Maggio," are a new creation in Italy, both for the enthusiasm that inspired them, and for the metres and language in which they were dictated.

Had Italian literature produced nothing in this century besides those few sacred verses, there would be no reason to conceive any serious apprehensions of its decline. Such effusions are not only beyond reach of translation or imitation, but are not even to be duly appreciated by any foreigner to whom the Italian language has not become a second nature.

The same or analogous remarks are applicable to Manzoni's historical novel.

"I Promessi Sposi," has placed Manzoni by the side of Scott. Yet the reader who takes up that book for a novel, will find himself sadly disappointed. It has already been imputed as a fault to the original inventor of that class of writing, that his two first volumes were wasted in painting manners and times, and that the action proceeded slowly until the beginning of the third.

But in Manzoni, there is no action at all. A parson, a capuchin, a nun, a cardinal, a pedant, a gossip, are successively introduced: it takes two or three chapters to acquaint us with each of them; insurrections and famine, rapes, conversions, pestilence, are produced; but the author seems embarrassed with the means he has called to his aid,—the conjuror seems at a loss how to get rid of the demons he has ventured to evoke.

True, each of those episodes is in itself worth a romance. True, every thing is breathing with the colours of life. But why should such beauties have been put together with such a deplorable absence of any attempt at order and plan? Why should they crowd the scene without giving it movement and life?

The works of Manzoni have a far greater object in view than to minister to the amusement of his audience or of his readers. Every line he ever wrote is intended as instrumental to a great revolution, in which he has not a few associates among the Italian patriots—a reaction in favour of catholicism.

The ravages that the French revolution inflicted upon Italy had demolished the last remnants of the catholic edifice. Scepticism in 1814 was the order of the day. Nothing was any longer true; nothing was sacred. French philosophy had struck to the right and left, until the whole building was levelled to the ground, and strewed salt upon the soil, condemning it to eternal sterility.

Manzoni, and other romantic innovators, seemed not yet to despair of religion. They cast their gauntlet to that chilling philosophy, and entered the list for God and his revelation. They hoped by that pious device to gain over to the cause of Italian emancipation the

soundest part of the clergy, and the moderate minds that French irreverence had alienated from the cause of liberty, and to make the cross and mitre the rallying standard for an Italian confederacy.

But there was more ardour in their emprise than discernment. Their chivalrous magnanimity led them to take upon themselves the whole of the question, the wrong side as well as the right. They were too firmly persuaded that, in the actual state of things, all must be saved or nothing; that any concession made to the liberal spirit of the age, must lead to a general subversion of principles; that the removal of a single stone will bring the whole fabric to the ground.

It may be permitted to entertain different opinions. Christianity relies for its preservation on its divine origin, on the simplicity of its primitive institutions, on its natural evidences, on the sanctity of its morals, on the gratitude of the world for its regenerating influences;—its fate can never be involved in the ruin of any ecclesiastical system.

If the Italian catholics are to recover from their apathy of scepticism, from the religious death into which they had fallen, all must be laid aside that led them to this deplorable condition; all must be rejected that offered a

weak side to the shafts of infidelity. The spirit of Christianity may yet be revived; but catholic bigotry never. If it were possible for the revelation of God to be utterly rejected in Italy, it could only happen in consequence of the accursed obstinacy with which popes and monks are forced upon that unfortunate people.

What patriotic object, then, could the novelist propose to himself, when he made a monk and a cardinal his favourite heroes; when, in an enlightened though oppressed country, in the age of Galileo and Sarpi, he found no greatness, no virtue, but under the cowl or the mitre? Why did he choose his subject out of a period of oppression and woe? Does history tell nothing of Italy but reverses? Or has she no reverses unmixed with disgrace? Or did he think that ancient disgrace could atone for present abjectness? Or did he wish to reconcile his country to her present abjectness by the despairing conviction that such has always been, such must always be her doom?

With far more limited powers, other novelists in Italy have better divined their times.—Romance is in Italy, as elsewhere, the most popular literature. The Waverley Novels have made the traditions of an obscure kingdom, the inheritance of all Europe. Walter Scott

is a sorcerer in Italy; nor could it be expected that the Italian novels should be free from imitation of the great master. Few of those numberless productions can in fact hitherto lay great claims to original invention; few, it must be confessed, display any great merit, or deserve to be mentioned abroad. It is there, as in other countries, a short-lived literature, whose durability is in an inverted ratio with its popularity.

The authors of these novels, however, have over Manzoni the great advantage of having illustrated such periods of the history of their country as awaken a ready interest, and leave a lasting impression.

The annals of Italy, her early revolutions, her unfortunate discords and feuds, could have afforded to Manzoni but too many incidents and characters, more interesting than his "Renzo" and "Fra Cristoforo." Indeed, no novel can be more entertaining than the "History of the Italian Republics in the Middle Ages," by Sismondi: on that account Manzoni's son-in-law, Massimo d' Azeglio, has shown him, in his "Ettore Fieramosca," what excitement could be raised in Italy by a popular narrative, the revival of a long-forgotten page of history, intended to raise the desponding Italians to a better opinion of themselves.

Manzoni's sacred hymns, his tragedies, his ode on Napoleon, every chapter in his novel, were eminently catholic works. They seem to have been expressly undertaken for the sake of glorifying the importance of the redeeming mission of catholicism, and illustrating the sublimity of its sacred rites.

But, more lately, he consecrated himself to a book, which was meant as a recapitulation of the ascetic theories he had indirectly diffused throughout his works. The flame of charity he had clothed under the glowing flashes of lyrical poetry: the profound meditations he had veiled under the pathos of tragedy: the salutary lessons resulting from the development of the catastrophe of romance, all this was reduced to system in his "Morale Cattolica." His ideas have taken form, method and consistency; the apostle has cast off his mantle, and accomplished his mission.

But from what I have said on this subject, it seems natural to conclude that even the name of Manzoni is not sufficient to gain over readers to writings of that nature. The author undertook to prove too much: and his very book will stand as an indirect proof against catholicism, insomuch as it will seem that a cause must be desperate indeed, in which even such an advocate has no chance of success.

It seems to me that every friend of true religion ought to be fully aware that, however the traditions of their annals, long custom, and natural adhesiveness, may bind the Italians to what has long been the exclusive creed of their fathers; although they look at the cross not only as a sign of universal redemption, but as a standard of national reunion and regeneration,—still the progressive attacks of protestantism, and the sudden ravages of philosophy, have undermined the catholic edifice where it had laid its deepest foundations; and the generous souls who show the most anxiety for its preservation, inwardly feel, and openly admit the necessity of a reformation of its abuses.

It appears that, with the exception of the catholic name, which will be perhaps adhered to through patriotic pride and delicacy, and of a few harmless mysteries and august rites which will be respected, partly through veneration, and partly through policy, the general tenets of the creed of the Italians will soon be found on a level with those most generally received among the protestant denominations.

It appears that public opinion has already taken long since—is now more than ever taking that course, though its general manifestation is retarded by that fatal combination of political

evils against which that unfortunate nation is struggling.

The noblest pledge that the Italians can give of their being ripe for more generous institutions, is the general moderation—the tolerant, conciliating spirit that reigns among them; though I am grieved to say, that it is partly owing to the state of religious apathy into which they have fallen.

When flagrant scandals, continual abuses, and tyrannical discipline, are conspiring with a progressive culture and a restless inquisitiveness to dishearten the most imperturbable zeal; when, in the general relaxing of the bonds of prescription, every man is obliged to come to partial exceptions and restrictions—to choose his own way, and form, as it were, a distinct sect by himself, he must easily know how to value the advantages of freedom of thought, and feel disposed to look upon the opinions of others with that same indulgence and impartiality which he would fain claim for himself.

It is worthy of remark that, in a country where the number of free-thinkers is so considerably extended, an open apostle of infidelity is rarely to be found. Infidelity is rather a fashion than a conviction. Catholicism is spurned by the learned and refined as something idiotic and vulgar. But before the peo-

ple the sceptic represses his sneers, and leaves to the illiterate his illusions and superstitions; envying, perhaps, in the secresy of his heart, the peace and self-satisfaction which even those absurd rites seem to bestow on the believer; and which he cannot find in all the subtleties of his logic. On the other hand, the good catholic shakes his head with compassion and charity—endeavours to disbelieve his own eyes, at the sight of so many of the noblest minds straying from the right path, and mutters between his teeth, that "the wisdom of man is but folly in the sight of God."

It is greatly to be regretted, that his more than devoted exertions in favour of religion, have estranged Manzoni from the lighter branches of literature, especially the drama, into which, notwithstanding his lack of really dramatic talents, he was likely, by repeated essays, to introduce a salutary revolution.

Deprived of his important countenance, the Romantic reform that had commenced under his auspices, remained incomplete; and those of the modern dramatists, who are considered as belonging to his school, have been led from extravagance to extravagance, until the very name of Romanticism had fallen under the strokes of that most irresistible of weapons—ridicule.

This, however, only arose from the error of confounding the theories of the Romantic with the French school of Victor Hugo. Romanticism is an abstract, conventional term, by which the Italians designate the appropriation of literature to the age and country from which it springs; the consentaneousness with, and the influence upon the feelings, the wants, the creeds, the memorials, and the high destinies of man in the various stages of society, in which it finds him. Romanticism for us is Nature, that gave Homer to heroic Greece; Tacitus to degraded Rome; Dante to distracted Italy; Shakspeare to aspiring England. Romanticism we call the literature of the *Romance* languages, as long as this is an emanation from the Romance virtues, Christianity, chivalry, patriotism.

That school was, therefore, not responsible for the aberrations of taste; for the exaggeration of tragic enormities, which, principally imported from France and Germany, had darkened the pages of a few frantic productions, now enjoying in Italy an ephemeral popularity. This is a general disease of the age, the result of the turbid humours, tainting the spirit; a depravation of feelings such as led the ancient Romans to their bloody games of wild beasts and gladiators; a deplorable mania, invading

music and painting, ballets and operas, turning the stage into a slaughter-house, making heroes of ruffians and wantons, to blunt and drown sensibility, to give us ague, headache, and heart-sickness.

Such was not the Romanticism of Manzoni. There were in his school ideas teeming with vigour and youth, with life and activity; its principles were consonant with the newly-awakened longings for political freedom, for moral and mental emancipation; its supporters appealed to all that was noblest or dearest in modern patriotism; they aspired to make of literature a matter of national pride—an instrument of social progress—an emanation from life.

The lessons of Romanticism could not be utterly lost, however unsuccessful its earliest specimens might have proved to be; neither could classicism be revived, although the present age had nothing to substitute in its place. Hence that state of uncertainty and dissatisfaction that prevents the people of Italy from following a determined course, and laying the basis of a national school. For, on the one side, the Greco-Latin type of beauty, noble and venerable as it is in its relation to the past, is utterly insufficient to the wants, and in opposition to the tendencies of the present; nor

can any sympathy be established between the Italians of the nineteenth century, and the heroes of fabulous Greece—between the patriots of young Italy, and that

"Race d'Agamemnon qui ne finit jamais."

But it is, on the other side, not quite evident why the dramatic rules, the grim legends of the German and Scandinavian nations, should better suit the sunny imaginations and the lively feelings of a southern people. To substitute the imitation of Schiller or Shakspeare, for that of Æschylus or Euripides, would be a strange way of providing for the development of an independent national taste. The classical style of Greece and Rome, is to be banished as something obsolete and alien. But is Italy to receive her models from *Oltremonti?* Are indeed the dramas, and the novel of Manzoni, more national productions than those of Alfieri and Foscolo? Is there among those romantic structures, an edifice that can be considered as essentially belonging to a genuine Italian school? The Italians were glad to receive from their neighbours the example of that truly Teutonic independence with which they had shaken off the fetters of classical pedantry; but they did not mean that their idolatrous imitation of the classics should be superseded

by an equally servile dependence on northern Romanticism.

The feelings that prevail in Italy on literary subjects, have an analogous influence on all questions connected with religion and politics.

The Italians are certainly unanimous in wishing for the cessation of that state of vassalage in which they are held by Austrian preponderance. But the soundest part of the nation are fully aware that the assistance of French propagandists, or any other foreign interference, would be rather a questionable means of attaining national emancipation. In the like manner the best cultivated classes are keenly alive to the degeneration of their church; but they are not quite ready to exchange Roman catholicism for Swiss or German protestantism: they are not so surely disposed, as some sanguine missionaries are willing to expect, to withdraw their allegiance from the Bishop of Rome, to acknowledge the supremacy of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Literature, church and government, must be Italian. The present state of things is, therefore, merely to be considered as an epoch of transition. The writers of the day endeavour to find a middle way between the barrenness of the ancient, and the exuberance of the modern school,—between Alfieri and Manzoni.

The subjects for dramas and novels are invariably selected from modern history; from that inexhaustible mine of literary treasures, the middle ages; from the national glories of republican times; from the domestic tragedies of their domestic tyrants; from the gloomy atrocities of the Roman and Venetian Inquisition.

In so far they deem it expedient to obey the influence of Romantic innovation. But their works are more or less rigidly framed after the models of the ancient.

The style also is strictly classical. The Italian language has, during the course of five centuries, strangely deviated from the original simplicity of the age of Dante. Antiquated by the Latinists of the age of Poggio Bracciolini; diluted by the prating *Cinquecentisti;* distracted by the raving *Seicentisti*; adulterated by the *Gallomaniacs* of the last century; soiled by long flattery and servility,—that noble language lies down, overcome and prostrated, an artificial construction of empty words: cumbrous not rich, pedantic not correct, with scarcely any of its original beauties except its ever fascinating melody.

Poetry is in Italy a different language from prose. Nature suggested plain constructions; art invented elaborate inversions. All that is

simple and natural, the poet rejects as vulgar. The poet never calls things by their names. His style is opposed to common life; as in the poems of Homer all objects have a name among gods, a name among mortals. Hence a great number of ideas find no utterance in verse, and poetry sounds like Greek to the ears of the multitude.

The Romantic school had made vigorous efforts to strip Italian poetry of its tinselled frippery. Manzoni's Venetian senators are made to speak, as they may be supposed—as they are known to have done. The modern *Voi*, which had disappeared from the heroic style ever since the days of Ariosto, to give way to the Roman republican *Tu*, had been restored to the tragic dialogue by the author of "Carmagnola."

With the same views, he did not shrink from expressions which, simple, true and natural as they are, would, however, have been proscribed by Alfieri, as too closely approaching conversational triviality. By thus renouncing that false pomp and magnificence, Manzoni gained vigour and purity, in proportion as he adopted ease and simplicity. He enriched his style with the spontaneousness of popular phraseology. He made his personages speak from, and, consequently, resemble life.

The partizans of the conciliatory school have thought otherwise. Together with the frame of the classical drama they deem it expedient to revive the *beau-ideal* of heroic dialogue. They brought the poetical language of Italy back to Alfieri's grandiloquence.

At the head of this cautious and transitory school, are Pellico and Niccolini

Had not the author of "Francesca da Rimini," been struck by the political vengeance of Austria in the very prime of youth; had not his lofty spirit been so miserably broken among the squalor and agony of his ten years' imprisonment,—Italian poetry would have found in him one of its greatest ornaments.

That juvenile performance of Pellico was, on its first appearance in 1820, and continues, the most popular tragedy in Italy ever since the palmy days of Alfieri.

Its success is probably partly owing to the author's happy choice of his subject. The story of Francesca was associated with that most touching episode in Italian poetry,—that short and fugitive effusion of tender pathos into which the stern soul of Dante once, and once only, consented to melt. Moreover, "Francesca" was a tragedy of love. It dwelt on one of the many chords of the human heart that Alfieri had left untouched. It is also warm all

over and glowing with those flashes of patriotism which are now an indispensable ingredient in every literary work.

To these advantages, more than to its real merit, that tragedy owed its success. But there was enough of Pellico's tender, ingenuous, and passionate soul to compensate for the defects of that juvenile production, and it was very justly considered as the performance of a most promising genius.

The hopes of Pellico's countrymen were never to be realized. His other dramas, and his *Cantiche,* or chivalrous legends in verse, generally drawn from the chronicles of the middle ages, were far from answering the general anticipation; and though generally written in good taste, and destined, perhaps, to rise in the public estimation, they are visibly affected by the prostration and languor of a prison.

The name of Pellico is to remain attached to another work, that of which he himself is the hero.

"Le Mie Prigioni" has obtained more popularity in England, in Germany, in America, than it could ever meet with in Italy.

In happier countries, where the social order is permanently established,—among nations blessed with the influence of self-imposed institutions, secure from foreign aggressions, free

from the brand of foreign vassalage, what the general welfare most requires of the citizen is a sedate, well-disciplined temper. Every reluctant, ambitious spirit would prove but fatal to public tranquillity. But in Italy, in the midst of stifled passions and crushed ideas,—in a land of impotent struggles against violence, how would acquiescence in existing circumstances be interpreted but as cowardly stupidity? What would be the result of such a temper but to provoke more outrage, and secure impunity to the oppressor?

The "Prisons" of Pellico is not the work of a bigot,—not of a man who has forsaken his cause, or wishes for a reconciliation with his unrelenting foe. It is the long, painful effort of a man who has traced his sufferings to his Maker, blessed him for the trial he was pleased to inflict, adored his will in his instruments.—Sublime virtues! But the long solitude of his sorrows had made him alone: he had withdrawn himself from the cause he had served; he had stifled all the natural indignation of a patriot. He had pardoned not only his own wrongs, but those of his country. Spielberg was for him a cloister, with oblivion at its threshold. Italy wanted from him no political rashness, no vehemence; but there is a measure in all things. If all his countrymen should

embrace his maxims, it would be over for ever with Italy.

We may drop a tear of sympathy on the narrative of evils that would have overcome the most heroic constancy; we may admire the self-possession of a victim who spares his executioner the expression of vain resentment and invective,—but Italy must derive a different moral from the doctrines of Christ. God has not created man in his own image to offer him an object of outrage and torture to his fellow-being. "Let the Austrian recross the Alps, and he shall be a brother again."

Such are the doctrines that must needs be preached in Italy. Such the maxims which have secured the success of Niccolini, a man who commenced his career several years earlier than either Manzoni or Pellico, and was less fortunate in the choice of a middle way between Classicism and Romanticism.

His masterpieces, "Antonio Foscarini," and "Giovanni da Procida," are conducted with that hesitancy and timidity which betray the author's intention of serving two masters. But all imperfections are happily mantled in a rich, flowing drapery of eminently lyrical, rather more than dramatic style, and by frequent flashes of that theatrical sublimity which the French consider as the characteristic gift

of Corneille's genius. It must be confessed that some of those emphatic passages, inasmuch as they harmonize with the popular feelings of the audience, have power to dazzle the imagination, and elicit universal applause, ere reason is consulted as to their appropriateness and opportunity. Niccolini is the most successful reviver of Alfieri's style.

But, as I have said, the school of Alfieri ought to be considered as utterly exploded. The influence that the prevailing ideas of Romanticism exercise even on those literary men who declare themselves its opponents, is felt throughout all recent productions: and this state of literary anarchy, necessarily arising from division of opinions, has led to the important result of assuring to every individual genius the independent right of following his own taste,—of deriving the beautiful from its immediate fountains, and reproducing it in its natural dimensions, in its original order.

It has accomplished the emancipation of literature.

Grossi, the Bellini of poetry, as he is called in Italy, the poet of the heart, the bard of broken-hearted maidens, the author of "Ildegonda" and "La Fuggitiva;"—Berchet, whose patriotic hymns have power, as his admirers have said, to produce home-sickness in the exile's

bosom;—Giannone, the author of "L' Esule," the minstrel of Carbonarism, who dared to reveal the mysteries of that dark association, in verse, and a few other young rhymers of high expectation in their country, but whose names are still too faint a sound to have reached foreign shores,—all of them either rapidly advance in Manzoni's footsteps, or open new paths for themselves.

Such is the poetry Italy is in need of. But those hundreds of dramas composed with a certainty that they will never be allowed to appear on the stage for which they were intended; hundreds of novels never to be printed, or only abroad,—written with a hand trembling with the apprehension that the author may be involved in the proscription of his works,—that he may be subjected to vexatious domiciliary visits from the police in quest of his manuscript, even six years after its publication—as it is done every day even under the so-called "mild and benignant" rule of the Grand Duke of Tuscany;—poems in which every word must be maturely weighed, so as to enable them to undergo the ordeal of the censor's revise,—must constitute but a cramped and stunted literature.

The noblest minds, in fact, seem to have forsaken those arts which are called liberal,

because they cannot flourish without being fostered by the element of liberty. Cesare Cantù, a poet of some reputation in Lombardy, has ventured on a new work on universal history, which is likely to engage his attention during all his lifetime. Niccolini, as we have seen, one of the greatest living tragedians, has also abandoned the drama for a very important work on the history of the house of Swabia; and Rosini, a successful novelist, has changed the lively style of Romantic narrative, for the more serious task of a history of painting.

Everywhere this preponderance of grave and useful pursuits over the works of imagination, is observable in Italy. It seems as if the natural fecundity of that gifted land were for the third time exhausted, as it was evidently the case in the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, when national poetry and eloquence were either plunged into a deep sleep, or corrupted by extravagance and bombast, to give way, in the first instance, to the classical researches of Bracciolini and Valla; in the second, to the physical discoveries of the school of Galileo.

It seems as if to every age of active and creative life, a period of comparative repose must necessarily ensue, to be consecrated to the toils of erudition, to prepare the soil on

which, in more fortunate circumstances, a new vegetation is to germinate. Such an epoch of rest and transition Italy has reached in our days, and the efforts of the scholars of that country seem rather directed to search into the monuments of the past, to collect materials for the future, than to provide for the wants of the present.

Our age is the age of history. We succeed to a generation whose object it was to war with the past; to carry on, in the name of liberty, the most illiberal and indiscriminating system of demolition. They thought that the evils of feudal and ecclesiastical usurpations, could not be considered as fundamentally eradicated until the very records of those institutions were erased from the memory of men. It was a hasty and presumptuous age, that loved to tread on the relics of the past with a feeling akin to that of the ancient Tartars, who levelled all buildings with the ground, lest they should prove an incumbrance to the velocity of their steeds.

Such a state of violence could not fail to bring about a reaction in our days: in fact, men are beginning again to study the institutions of our forefathers, and to derive important instructions from the very evils which we are most inclined to deplore.

The ephemeral duration of the specious systems of the reformers of the last age, is to be chiefly attributed to the unsparing sentence which they pronounced against every thing that belonged to the past. No era can be considered apart from the foregoing periods. Human progress, like every thing else, must obey the universal rule of continuity; and the better we know in what degree of the scale of civilization we have been left by our fathers, the bolder will be our onward start, the wider and safer our strides.

The period of repose that followed the downfal of Napoleon, has witnessed the unanimous efforts of all Europe for an accurate compilation of history. Italy, of all countries the most absolutely doomed to political and commercial inactivity, affords the more leisure for historical inquiry. History is, as I have said, one of the main instruments on which the Italians rely for a revival of national spirit.

It is remarkable, that whilst history, as well as almost every thing else that is noble or beautiful in modern civilization, either originated or was revived in Italy; whilst that country may justly boast of having produced the greatest number of excellent historians,—there should be as yet no work answering the purpose of a general history of Italy.

Besides the political impediments, or party prejudices, commonly alleged as the great obstacle to the completion of such a work, the vastness and labour of the undertaking are alone sufficient to deter the most active and persevering mind; nor could a just idea of the extent of the subject be formed from considering similar works on the history of the other countries of Europe.

The annals of these last can always be referred to one determinate epoch, and comprehended within one period: and though the natural course of events may have been repeatedly interrupted, and the national unity broken, still there is always a centre, a great metropolis, a dynasty, forming, as it were, the main *cordillera* from which all secondary chains can be easily traced, and on which they mainly depend. That political, literary and scientific spirit of centralization, by which all historical monuments are insensibly drawn to enrich the royal museums and archives of the capitals, enable the French and English historian to survey, at a glance, the materials for his narrative.

But the history of Italy is the history of many nations and states. With its head hidden among the clouds of antiquity, the history of the country, acting for many ages the principal

part in a drama, in which other nations only played the episodes, is necessarily divided into several distinct periods, and each period into a number of sub-divisions, offering but few general points of analytical survey.

Besides, our age has witnessed a revolution in history, no less than in every other branch of science and literature; and for this we are, in great part, indebted to the indefatigable activity and diligence of the Germans.

We have been taught that history is a thing apart from historical romance: that we must sacrifice even what is noble or beautiful on the altar of truth: that no assertion is to be admitted, however long cherished in popular tradition, flattering to national vanity, or akin to feelings of our nature, unless grounded upon such solid bases, and confirmed by such irrefragable documents, as sufficiently constitute the evidence, or at least the plausibility of its authenticity.

Truly this system of matter-of-fact research may be, and has already been, carried to an extreme; and, by a vain display of erudition, historical works have often been made to groan under the weight of unprofitable appendices, and the attention of the reader has been drawn into a labyrinth of puerile discussions. An unlimited credit has too often been bestowed

upon moth-eaten manuscripts; or too wide and vague an interpretation of fragmentary inscriptions has led to conclusions verging on absurdity. We have had occasion again and again to deplore the demolition of some of the specious fabrics of our forefathers, which had a stirring influence on our imagination; and we could never, for instance, cordially rejoice at the ingenuity of those writers who succeeded in ranking the exploits and existence of William Tell among the fictions of Helvetian mythology.

But it is, nevertheless, a fact, that no historian, however venerable his character, can any longer advance assertions merely upon personal responsibility. No historical essay is, in our days, expected to come to light without a supply of quotations and references from the texts of long-forgotten authors, reported with all their luxury of quaint orthography or obsolete language,—without a display of ancient charters, edicts, letters, medals and inscriptions, —and without discriminately weighing and sifting all those different, and often contradictory testimonies, from which may result the corroboration of the opinions started in the text.

We have already seen what zealous collectors and publishers of historical documents the Italians have been, especially in the age of

Muratori. It would appear, that if any country in the world might be considered especially rich in historical monuments, and therefore entitled to repose from labour, that country is Italy.

The Italians are, however, far from considering their preparatory work as complete; and no sooner had the country recovered from the consequences of the French revolution, than they resumed the work, and soon found that the field of discovery widened in proportion as their progress seemed more rapid.

It had been a subject of universal regret, that at the epoch of Muratori's gigantic undertakings, the Piedmontese archives were shut against him by the jealousy of the government, and that his collection remained imperfect so far as related to Western Italy.

The diligence of Piedmontese scholars, in our days, has laid open what the narrow-mindedness of the Dukes of Savoy had withdrawn from public curiosity: and the monuments of national history published by the royal deputation during the last four years, have gone far to satisfy the most anxious demands of the learned.

The historical documents of Tuscany, Lombardy, and other provinces, relating to the middle ages, were already before the public;

but the gleaning of what may have been left from the harvest of Muratori's contemporaries, and the collection of documents of a more recent date, are the main objects of Italian scholars.

The documents of Italian history brought into light from the royal libraries, by Italians residing abroad, and the more important collection of Reports of Venetian ambassadors, a complete edition of which is now in progress of publication in Florence, are sufficient to show how eagerly the Italians are employed in the illustration of their national annals.

Besides the works resulting from the efforts of generous associations, every province, every insignificant town, has, within the course of the last ten years, produced its annals; and as every modern work of that nature is the summary of all historical documents that each city or district can yield, all bring their local tribute to be added to the great mass of national historical erudition.

Such partial performances, however, can hardly be compared to efforts of a more daring nature, the greatest number of which are now in course of publication, and which are intended to condense the quantity of materials already known, and render them generally accessible to readers.

It must be confessed that a country in

which, twenty or thirty years ago, the Marquis Rovalli printed his splendid History of Como, and disposed of only eighty-three copies of it; and Pietro Verri sold no more than one copy of his History of Milan, and in which now so many thousand volumes of dry historical erudition are yearly printed and sold,—is not a country to be despaired of; nor can we look without sympathy and admiration on the efforts of a nation, of all others in the world, except the Jews, the most divided and scattered, so unanimously co-operating in that one object of studying their history, as if, by dwelling on the glorious reminiscences of the past, they sought a refuge against the melancholy feeling of their present dejection.

Meanwhile, as we have said, in the midst of such vast means, the man has not yet arisen to give order and life to that formless and ponderous mass of heterogeneous materials, and a general history of Italy still remains to be written.

The earliest attempts ever made with any degree of success to answer that purpose, were the "Annali d' Italia," of Muratori, the "Rivoluzioni d' Italia," by Carlo Denina, the "Storia d' Italia Antica e Moderna," by Luigi Bossi, and the three volumes of Botta, entitled, "Histoire des Peuples d'Italie."

More recent essays on the same subjects, have been made by Cesare Balbo, at Turin, and Carlo Troya, at Naples. But all these works are either works of erudition, and hardly to be numbered among the writings on philosophical history, or they do not display that wide power of genius, that eagle eye, which embraces, at one glance, an immensity of objects, and presents them in their mutual relations with that proportion which makes even of history an edifice obedient to the laws of architecture.

Truly it would seem that the Italians apply themselves to the compilation of their history, as ancient artists raised their architectural monuments for the amazement of posterity. Muratori, like Bramante or Arnolfo di Lapo, gave the first model, and planned the foundation of a mighty edifice: each successive generation added its tribute of important materials: ambitious artists brought forward their abortive designs: summers and winters revolved upon the unroofed aisles. But the day is yet to come, when the work shall feel the impulse of the hand of Brunelleschi, or a Michael Angelo; when it shall be said, as of the Roman and Florentine domes, "Time has done, but time shall not undo."

Meanwhile, even these works of plodding erudition, though they afford the means of a

more practicable evasion, are not unfrequently thwarted by the odious tyranny of the police. The editor of the ill-fated "Antologia di Firenze," has been these ten years applying in vain for permission to publish a "*Biblioteca Storica,*" in the shape of a monthly journal, intended to constitute a periodical register of every discovery connected with historical subjects. The history of the house of Swabia, by Niccolini, and the history of the times of the Tuscan reformer, Peter Leopold, which the Marquis Gino Capponi has completed in the midst of harassing difficulties, are still awaiting an *imprimatur*, which will, perhaps, never be granted.

This takes place under the auspices of the "mild and benignant" Duke of Tuscany; for I should consider it as superfluous to state that Botta's works have never been allowed to appear at Milan; that Leoni's translation of so innoxious a book as Hallam's "Middle Ages," was only permitted to be published at Lugano; that the Sardinian government has recently banished the author of a work on the Statistics of the Commerce of Genoa, etc.

It is thus, not only without any expectation of pecuniary remuneration, and even with immense sacrifice—for Count Litta, for instance, has wasted his fortune in the compilation of

his splendid work, "Famiglie Celebri d' Italia"—but also with personal vexation and danger, that history must be written in Italy. The historian, as well as the poet, the chemist, the physician, the artist, every intelligent being, in short, who endeavours to turn the *talent* he was blest with from Heaven, to any noble or useful purposes, is equally liable to be visited with the vengeance of despotism. Foscolo, Berchet and Pellico, Botta, Gioïa and Colletta, Rasori, Tommasini, and Baratta, Orioli, Nobili, and Melloni, men of every calling and condition, have all equally suffered.

And yet individual persecution is hardly so fatal to mental progress, as the state of seclusion in which the whole nation is kept by that kind of literary quarantine established by the mean-spirited jealousy of the governments, which hardly allows the Italians to consider themselves as members of the great European family; so that of the headlong march of intellect so wonderfully changing the state of civilized societies, only a faint sound is heard on the sunny side of the Alps.

Consequently there is, in Italy, more daring of conception, than power of execution; more energy of life, more want of exertion, than can be turned to profitable objects; more impatience and restlessness, than real strength and sere-

nity of mind. The Italian thinker sinks into despondency, as he sees the result, at which he has arrived, late and weary, after years of solitary efforts, thrown into utter insignificance by the wide and rapid attainments to which a wise distribution of labour has led the numerous scientific associations abroad.

Southern peoples, since the spirit of chivalrous adventures spread among them a distaste for gregarious undertakings, have not yet learned thoroughly to understand the utter helplessness of individuals, and the consequent necessity of relying on the combined efficiency of masses. There is a jealousy, a self-sufficiency, a mutual disdainfulness and indocility, which have contributed to oppose literary good understanding in Italy, scarcely less than the forbidding frowns of Austrian suspicion.

Hence, it is painful to say, the exile's lot is far from being the most dreadful to the high-minded and generous; and unless he sinks into home-sickness and despondency,—unless he indulges in lonely and misanthropic habits, the Italian, travelling abroad, feels his mind refreshed, and his spirits elated, by the enjoyment of freedom; and, at his return, the miserable spectacle of a lazy priesthood, of a beggarly populace, and, more so, the sight of the Austrians, make him loathe the very air of

that genial climate as the tainted air of a prison.

Has Providence no brighter days in store for Italy? Shall evil prevail until the most undaunted longanimity is broken? Must we despair even of the omnipotence of Thought? Must we believe that this present intellectual strife, dating from the very epoch of the utter annihilation of physical resistance, will prove equally unavailing and powerless?

Shall there be no future for Italy, but a long, lingering, eternal decay?

Events alone may answer these questions—and events which few of the living generation are, perhaps, destined to witness.

Meanwhile, be it remembered, that there are many in Italy who believe still, and hope: many for whom, without that faith and hope, life would be only wormwood and gall: many who, could they feel convinced that all is irreparably lost for their country, would rather see it

> "'Whelmed beneath the waves, and shun,
> Even in destruction's depth, her foreign foes,
> From whom submission wrings an infamous repose."

THE END.

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